DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 452 568 CS 217 543

AUTHOR Koulourianos, Eleni; Marienau, Vickie
TITLE Improving Students' Confidence in Writing Achievement through the Use of Parent, Student, and Teacher Interventions.
PUB DATE 2001-05-00
NOTE 146p.; Master of Arts Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and SkyLight Professional Development.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Action Research; Elementary Education; Grade 3; Grade 5; *Parent Participation; *Student Attitudes; Teaching Methods; *Writing Attitudes; *Writing Improvement; *Writing Instruction; Writing Research

ABSTRACT

This study describes strategies used to increase student confidence in their overall writing achievement. The targeted population consists of third and fifth grade students from the same district located in a northwest suburban area. This community is located near a large metropolitan city in a midwestern state. Lack of confidence in student writing contributes to lower student achievement as well as lower enthusiasm in writing. Evidence for the existence of this problem includes teacher observation and evaluation; student, teacher, and parent surveys; student writing samples; and state achievement test scores. Analyses of probable cause data reveals that confidence in overall writing can be affected by the teacher, the parent, and the student. The teacher and the parent help foster positive self-esteem which aides the child in becoming more confident in his (or her) writing abilities. Teachers and parents who are willing to implement various intervention strategies will be more successful with raising confidence in writing, which in turn links to higher overall writing achievement. We are only part of the tools that will help students succeed in their writing accomplishments. Teachers and parents must remember that positive self-esteem and confidence in writing is the child's own responsibility. A review of the solution strategies suggested by the professional literature, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the three areas of intervention. One area consisted of teacher intervention strategies, another is the parent intervention strategies done at home, and finally what the children themselves could do to raise their own self-esteem in writing. Results indicated an improvement in overall confidence in writing and skills; and parent participation was a significant asset to this writing program. Findings suggest that the writing strategies learned in the classroom, along with parent assistance, made an impact on students' writing achievement. Contains 34 references and 17 tables of data. The 48 appendixes contain survey instruments, writing prompts, checklists, planning sheets, tips and guides on writing, and parent letters. (Author/RS)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 452 568

IMPROVING STUDENTS' CONFIDENCE IN WRITING ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH THE USE OF PARENT, STUDENT, AND TEACHER INTERVENTIONS

Eleni Koulourianos
Vickie Marienau

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the

School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

St. Xavier University & SkyLight Professional Development

Field-Based Masters Program

Chicago, Illinois

May, 2001

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CS 217 543

V. L. Marienau

SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

Hellyn S. Semholt, EdD
Advisor

Advisor

Dean, School of Education

ABSTRACT

This study describes strategies used to increase student confidence in their overall writing achievement. The targeted population consists of third and fifth grade students from the same district located in a northwest suburban area. This community is located near a large metropolitan city in a midwestern state. Lack of confidence in student writing contributes to lower student achievement as well as lower enthusiasm in writing. Evidence for the existence of this problem includes teacher observation and evaluation; student, teacher, and parent surveys; student writing samples; and state achievement test scores.

Analyses of probable cause data revels that confidence in overall writing can be affected by the teacher, the parent, and the student. The teacher and the parent help foster positive self-esteem which aides the child in becoming more confident in his (or her) writing abilities. Teachers and parents who are willing to implement various intervention strategies will be more successful with raising confidence in writing, which in turn links to higher overall writing achievement. We are only part of the tools that will help students succeed in their writing accomplishments. Teachers and parents must remember that positive self-esteem and confidence in writing is the child's own responsibility.

A review of the solution strategies suggested by the professional literature, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the three areas of intervention. One area consisted of teacher intervention strategies, another is the parent intervention strategies done at home, and finally what the children themselves could do to raise their own self-esteem in writing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1-PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT 1

General Statement of the Problem 1

Immediate Problem Context School Site A 1

Immediate Problem Context School Site B 2

District and Staff 3

The Surrounding Community 6

National Context of the Problem 6

CHAPTER 2-PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION 10

Problem Evidence 10

Probable Causes 32

CHAPTER 3-THE SOLUTION STRATEGY 35

Literature Review 35

Project Objectives and Processes 44

Project Action Plan 45

Methods of Assessment 47

CHAPTER 4-PROJECT RESULTS 49

Historical Description of the Intervention 49

Presentation and Analysis of Results 59

Conclusions and Recommendations 74

REFERENCES 79

APPENDICES

Appendix A-Previous Teacher Letter 82

Appendix B-Previous Teacher Writing Survey 83

Appendix C-Previous Teacher Interview....84
Appendix D-Parent Writing Survey....85
Appendix E-Student Writing Survey....86
Appendix F-Pre-test Narrative Prompt....87
Appendix G-Teacher Writing Observation Checklist....88
Appendix H-Praise, Question, Polish Reflection Sheet....89
Appendix I-Praise, Question, Suggest Reflection Sheet....90
Appendix J-Writing Planner....91
Appendix K-Narrative Rubric....92
Appendix L-Persuasive/Expository Rubric....93
Appendix M-Parent Permission Slip....94
Appendix N-Parent Letter Requesting Binder....95
Appendix O-Proofreading/Editing Marks....96
Appendix P-Writing Checklist....97
Appendix Q-Writing Web/Graphic Organizer....98
Appendix R-Writing Checklist-3rd grade....99
Appendix S-Editing Checklist -Upper Elementary....100
Appendix T-Writing Conference -Teacher Notes....101
Appendix U-Bio Poem....102
Appendix V-Personal Narrative Graphic Organizer....103
Appendix W-Narrative Writing Planning Sheet....104
Appendix X-Parent Handbook Cover Page....105
Appendix Y-Tips for a Confident Writer....106
Appendix Z-The Three Types of Writing....107
Appendix AA-A Guide to Personal Narratives: Third Grade....108

Appendix BB-Student Friendly Rubric:Narrative.....109

Appendix CC-Student Friendly Rubric:Persuasive/Expository.....110

Appendix DD-"Musties" Words that I Must Spell Correctly.....111

Appendix EE-A Guide to Narrative Writing.....112

Appendix FF-A Guide to Persuasive Writing.....113

Appendix GG-A Guide to Expository Writing.....114

Appendices HH-Word Bank of 1200 High-Frequency Words.....115-121

Appendix II-Persuasive Writing Outline.....122

Appendix JJ-Persuasive Plan Sheet.....123

Appendix KK-Persuasive Planning Guide.....124

Appendix LL-Expository Writing Outline.....125

Appendix MM-Expository Planning Guide.....126

Appendix NN-Post-test Narrative Prompt.....127

Appendix OO-Post-Survey Parent Letter.....128

Appendix PP-Post-Parent Writing Survey.....129-130

Appendix QQ-Parent Portfolio Letter -Third Grade.....131

Appendix RR-Parent Portfolio Letter -Fifth Grade.....132

Appendix SS-Thoughts and Goals.....133

Appendix TT-Parent PQP.....134

Appendix UU-Parent Letter:Pen Pal Celebration.....135

Appendix VV-Find a Pen Pal Search.....136

CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted third and fifth grade classes exhibit lack of confidence in their writing that interferes with their overall writing achievement. Evidence for the existence of this problem includes teacher observation and evaluation, student, teacher, and parent surveys, and student writing samples.

Immediate Problem Context School Site A

School A is located in a suburban area, near a large metropolitan city in a midwestern state. School A is a K-5 building in a unit school district. Enrollment at School A has continually grown throughout the years. Currently, School A has 597 students. The average class size at School A is as follows: Kindergarten, 19.0 students, grade one, 20.8 students, and grade three, 24.4 students. There are four sections each of kindergarten, third, and fourth grades, while first, second, and fifth grades have five sections.

The school is not ethnically diverse; 98.5% of the students are White. A very small percentage of diverse ethnicity is reported as Hispanic 7%, Asian/Pacific Islander 5%, and Black 3%. Only 1% of students come from low income families. There is no reported Limited-English Proficient rate found in School A. Limited-English Proficient students include students whose first language is not English and

who are eligible for transitional bilingual education. A high attendance rate of 96.3% is prevalent at this school, with a chronic truancy rate of 0% reported. The student mobility rate is 5.6% which is based on a combined number of students who enroll in or leave a school during the school year.

The staff at School A is comprised of 57 females and six males. The staff consists of one principal, two administrative assistants, one nurse, 25 classroom teachers, five district special services staff, 13 special area staff, four classroom assistants, one media center assistance, and nine special service assistants.

The students are heterogeneously assigned to classrooms. The following subject areas and the weekly time devoted to teaching them is: mathematics (50 minutes), science (25 minutes), language arts (160 minutes), and social science (25 minutes). In addition to these core subjects, students also receive 75 minutes of physical education, 50 minutes each of media center, art, and music per week. Time devoted to the teaching of core subjects is the average number of minutes during instruction. This area of instruction is for a five day school week which utilizes each subject area and then divides that number by five.

Immediate Problem Context School Site B

School B is located in the same district and area as School A. School B is also a K-5 building in a unit school district. At the current time, enrollment at School B is 459 students. The average class size is as follows: kindergarten, 18.0 students, grade one, 20.3 students, and grade three, 19.8 students. There are three sections each of kindergarten, second, third, fourth, and fifth grades, while first grade has four sections.

Similar to School A, this school has little diversity in its ethnicity; 92.8% of the students are White. The other ethnic groups and their percentages of the total population are: Hispanic 3.9%, Asian/Pacific Islander 2.6%, and Black 0.7%. There is a low rate of 1.1% of students who come from low income families comparable to

School A. In addition, the Limited-English Proficient rate is 0%. There was also a high attendance rate of 95.1% during 1999. Moreover, there is a chronic truancy rate of zero percent reported. The student mobility rate is 11.6%, which is based on the number of students who enroll or leave a school during the year.

The staff at School B is comprised of 45 females and four males. The staff consists of one principal, two administrative assistants, one nurse, eighteen classroom teachers, five district special services staff, eleven special area staff, three classroom assistants, one media center assistance, and seven special service assistants.

The students are heterogeneously assigned to classrooms. The core subject areas and the daily time devoted to them are as follows: mathematics (50 minutes), science (25 minutes), language arts (160 minutes), and social science (25 minutes). In addition to the core subjects, students also receive 75 minutes of physical education, 50 minutes each of media center, art, and music per week.

District and Staff

Schools A and B reside in the same unit school district. The school district is comprised of eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The district serves a 72 square mile radius. The district serves over 7,900 students from pre-kindergarten through grade twelve. Blue Ribbon Awards have been given to three of the schools in this district from the United States Department of Education for the scope and progressiveness of each school's programs. Only a select few of all schools in the nation receive such an award. School A is a recipient of this honorable award. The per-pupil expenditure is estimated at $7,390, above the state average of $6,682. The central administrative office includes a superintendent, associate superintendent, business manager, director of human resources, and a director of special services. The Board of Education consists of seven members.

Schools A and B are comprised of a variety of staff members which include classroom teachers, as well as, teachers specializing in art, physical education, gifted, and computers. Currently, in 1999, the average teaching experience is 15.4 years. More than half of the teachers, 63.3%, have a master's degree or above, while 36.7% have earned a bachelor's degree. The average teacher salary is $56,920, while the average administrator salary reaches $97,028.

Similar to the students, the majority of the teachers are 98.0% White. The remaining ethnic groups include; 1% Hispanic, 0.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.3% Black. There are 69.4% female staff members and 30.6% male staff members. The pupil-teacher ratio throughout both elementary schools is 18.8 to 1.

The district is not only guided by its mission statement, "To help each student pursue excellence in learning through caring schools," but also by its Strategic Plan which was developed in cooperation with parents and community leaders. Ongoing strategies include: unity of students, staff, parents, community, and board; development of facility improvement plans; use of the school improvement planning process within buildings; assurance of fiscal responsibility; provision of adequate funding; and exploration of alternative delivery systems. Additionally, each school has its own goal articulation, implementation, and assessment process.

Improvement plans for School A and B include: increased use of technology to enhance the K-5 curriculum; emphasis on connections among subjects; continued use of performance assessments to evaluate student progress; collaborative efforts to infuse higher order thinking skills and problem solving as a critical part of teaching and learning; increased parental involvement in school; promotion of global perspectives; and improved communications among schools and homes.

The district has taken on an enormous task of curriculum mapping throughout all of the schools. Curriculum mapping is where teachers separate by grade level and

collaborate what they do for each subject area. This is done independently, prior to meeting as a whole district. They create a curriculum month-to-month map that will guide new teachers through that particular grade level. This helps each teacher know where their students have come from and where they need to be at the end of that grade level. It will also allow parents and administrators to become more knowledgeable about the expectations of each grade level.

Both Schools A and B offer a variety of academic programs to reach the needs of all students. Programs for the gifted and talented students are available. These programs are all put under the title of "resources". There is resource music and art for the children who are gifted in those areas. They are offered to students who are in first grade through fifth grade. They attend these classes once a week for approximately an hour. There are also resource math and language arts. Students are tested to enter all four programs when they are in second grade. Also, eligible learning disabled students receive support through special services in the areas of reading, writing, and math on a daily basis.

Schools A and B offer a wide range of activities to get the students actively involved before and after school. There is a before-school tutoring program for identified children in grades three, four, and five. The areas of focus are reading and writing. Also, before school there are a number of students involved in foreign language classes.

In addition, the district offers a variety of inter-scholastic activities. Intramural sports are available to students in grades four and five. Many district fifth grade students compete with one another in basketball and track. As part of the fifth grade curriculum the students go on an outdoor educational trip. The students learn about the importance of teamwork and life skills and transfer information from school subjects into real life situations in the four days and three nights that they are away

from their normal school environment.

Schools A and B have very active Parent Teacher Organizations (PTOs) which are always willing to help the students, teachers, and community. They give funds to the classroom teachers and to the schools. Parent volunteers help with fund raisers and social events.

The Surrounding Community

The surrounding community is 90 square miles and is located in four counties, six townships, and includes eight villages and various unincorporated areas. The population of the community is 40,000. The median age for the total population according to the 1990 census is 36.9. A median household income is $99,167. There are only 5.8% households which have an income below $15,000. The unemployment rate is at a low 2.2%. The median home value is $306,938. The median rent is $741.00. There is little racial or ethnic diversity in this community. The racial distribution is as follows; 96.5% White, 2.2% Hispanic, 1.1% Asian, Pacific Island Natives, and Native Americans, and 0.2% Black. There is a high percentage rate of 92.8% high school graduates of which 51.7% of these students graduate from college.

The community has a variety of parks and recreation facilities. Four parks incorporating a total of 137 acres offers facilities such as soccer and baseball fields, tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, a full-sized gymnasium, hiking and cross-country trails, picnic shelters, and a five-hole golf course. Numerous classes, organized recreation and leagues are also offered by the park district.

National Context of the Problem

Students exhibit lack of confidence in their writing that interferes with their overall writing achievement. As stated by Bottomley, Henk, and Melnick, "Because children's attitudes, values, beliefs, and motivation play a significant role in their literacy learning, the affective domain continues to be an area of interest for educators

and researchers" (Cramer & Castle, 1994; Turner & Paris, 1995, p. 286) . The problem relates to the lack of confidence in students' writing which interferes with their overall writing achievement. According to Bottomley, Henk, and Melnick (1997-1998), a children's self-perception of their own writing ability will affect their growth in the writing process. Students who have a positive self-perception about writing will put forth more effort into becoming better writers by engaging in activities which will reinforce their writing skills and process. The more a child practices the writing process, the more comfortable he or she will be with writing in its entirety. A lack of confidence in writing will display a negative effect towards writing or the child will not participate in the writing activity at all. Parents, peers, and teachers can help students become more confident in their writing skills and abilities.

The parents' roll in their children's confidence level is vital to the writer's self-perception. According to Carl Pickhardt (2000), parents can encourage their children to learn, foster creativity, develop competence, strengthen character, think positively, and manage emotions. Parents, with the help of educators, can influence a positive self-esteem in their children's writing ability. They can introduce and help foster these two rules of conduct to their children:

1. "Don't let how other people identify you limit how you define yourself."
2. "Don't let how other people evaluate you determine how you judge the worth of yourself" (Pickhardt, 2000, p.5).

Ultimately, the parents need to be great role models of self-esteem. "You cannot give to your children that which you do not possess yourself" (Pickhardt, 2000, p.5). For example, parents can model the writing process for their children. They can start by writing a rough draft, using a dictionary and/or thesaurus, sharing, editing, and finally ending with a final draft. This is a positive way to model self-confidence within the process of writing.

Self-esteem is primarily the children's own responsibility (Pickhardt, 2000). Early in their lives, they need to be taught the power of choice. The students define themselves with the roles they take on and the way they behave. Are the students continuing to try even when they are frustrated, or do they give up when difficult situations arise? These situations will either enhance or tear down the self-esteem of that student. Giving up will tend to weaken the self-esteem, while forging ahead will help to boost the self-esteem. In these difficult situations parents and teachers can persuade or even instruct the child through their situation. This will help the child persevere through their difficult problem and actually feel good about his or her final decision (Pickhardt, 2000).

Children have beliefs about themselves which they can evaluate (Pickhardt, 2000). These beliefs can be self-enhancing or even self-defeating. For example, a child may label oneself stupid because he or she made some errors in a final draft paper that was turned in and edited. The child's self-esteem may decrease after this difficult time, but it can be used as a teachable moment. The teacher or the parent can conference with the child to reiterate that making mistakes does not always have a negative connotation. "We believe that making mistakes are just a normal part of how people learn" (Pickhardt, 2000, p. 7). It is hoped that, the student will feel that something positive has been gained from the situation. To recap, the responsibility of self-esteem falls under all three parties: the parent, the teacher, and most of all the student.

- Managing his or her self-esteem is the child's personal responsibility.
- Teaching the child to manage his or her self-esteem is the parents' and teachers' instructional responsibility (Pickhardt, 2000).

The teacher is also an important component in helping to keep students' self confidence level positive in their writing. Writing is a process that can be taught to

children in a positive manner (Avery, 1993). Teachers at all levels find it difficult to stimulate students to write well without stifling their creativity and motivation. Writer's Workshop has been a helpful tool that has been recommended by several researchers to help organize and teach the writing process (Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1994; Hansen, 1987). Teachers can implement this process into their approach of writing. The mini-lessons, state-of-the-class conferences, writing and conferring, and group sharing are the four approaches that will further be discussed later in this project. A child's personal life and school life can be linked together throughout this writing process (Cooper, 1993). This process can aid to boost self-confidence when the child is given the opportunity to write.

"Business professionals and educators recognize the importance of well-developed writing skills" (Harper, 1987, p. 24). "Furthermore, writing ability has a major influence on executive promotion, performance appraisals, and salary increases" (Addams, 1981, p. 37; Bennet & Olney, 1986, p. 13). Becoming a good writer is a vital life skill that can be used outside of education. Businesses find writing to be an important asset for their employees to have as part of their job performance skills. In fact, millions of dollars are spent each year to train employees on writing skills for their jobs (Davis, 1995). Students, teachers, and parents can work together to help build confidence in the students' writing abilities and furthermore become successful, lifelong writers.

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of lack of confidence in students' writing ability, documents and information were collected as evidence of the problem. This documentation consisted of: previous teacher surveys and interviews, parent surveys, student surveys, narrative writing prompts, previous writing samples, classroom observations, and standardized test scores. This evidence was collected over a six week period of time.

Of the 49 students from Site A and B, all were involved in this process over the six week period of time. A letter was given and survey was administered to each students' previous year teacher (Appendices A and B). One student from Site A was unable to be part of the survey due to his move into the area this year. In this survey, each teacher was given the opportunity to record student strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the previous teacher included whether the students exhibited confidence in their writing abilities and other necessary comments regarding their previous students' writing skills.

After reviewing the writing surveys, we found that weaknesses varied but could be grouped into seven categories. These categories included organization, focus/content, mechanics, confidence/desire, timeliness, elaboration, and poor

handwriting skills. This previous teacher survey also indicated which students displayed confidence in writing during the previous school year. The findings are found in Table 1.

Table 1

Teacher Response to Survey Question on Students' Confidence

Behavior Category	Site A	Site B
Confidence	48%	34%
No Confidence	52%	66%

Of the 21 students who were involved in the previous teacher survey at Site A, 52 percent displayed lack of confidence in their writing abilities. Of the 27 students at Site B, 66 percent were found to lack confidence in their writing abilities. This information proved as evidence that there is an existing problem with confidence in over half of the students involved in this study.

Each of the six previous teachers participated in an interview pertaining to their writing environment in their classrooms (Appendix C). The first question on the interview pertained to the amount of time spent on writing. "How many minutes per week do you spend on writing in your classroom?" These results are shown in Table 2.A..

Table 2. A.

Teacher Response to Teacher Interview Question 1

Sites	600-400 minutes	400-200 minutes	200-0 minutes
A	1	1	1
B	1	1	1

The results were consistent between the two sites. Each teacher spent a variety of time on writing in their classroom. This gave evidence to the researchers that the amount of time spent on writing was inconsistent across that grade level. This also meant that the amount of time each student was exposed to writing varied.

The second question illustrated in Table 2.B. on the teacher interview pertained to how each teacher incorporated writing into their other subject areas. "In order of importance, which subjects do you incorporate writing into daily?" Findings are found in Table 2.B..

Table 2.B.

Teacher Response to Teacher Interview Question 2 By Rank

Site	Language Arts	Social Studies	Math	Science
A				
Teacher 1	1	2	4	3
Teacher 2	1	2	3	4
Teacher 3	1	2	3	4
B				
Teacher 1	2	1	3	1
Teacher 2	1	2	3	4
Teacher 3	1	2	4	3

These results ranked the content of writing within each subject area. The researchers found that 83 percent of the teachers ranked Language Arts number one for incorporating writing into that subject area. Eighty-three percent ranked social studies as the second level of importance. Math was ranked third by 67 percent of the teachers and science was ranked fourth by 50 percent. Each used writing throughout

their curriculums but valued writing in subjects differently.

Question number three from the interview asked previous teachers about their training on the three types of writing. The three teachers responded with a yes, somewhat, or no to the question, "Do you feel trained to teach the three types of writing? (narrative, persuasive, expository)" These results are shown in Table 2.C..

Table 2.C.

Teacher Response to Teacher Interview Question 3

Sites	yes	somewhat	no
A	2	0	1
B	0	3	0

This table displayed that out of six teachers half of them felt somewhat trained to teach the three types of writings, two teachers felt well trained, and one teacher did not feel trained at all. The teachers' training in writing varied, and therefore the students were not taught the same skills during their previous year in school. The children began the study knowing different facts about the three types of writing.

The fourth interview question asked, "What types of writing do you teach in your classroom?" Five of the six teachers responded that they taught all three types of writing in their classroom. One teacher from Site A only taught the narrative format of writing in her or his classroom. This information helped the researchers decipher that not all the students would have the same exposure to all three types of writing.

Question number five pertains to the components of writing that teachers use in their classroom. Question five asked, "What components of the writing process do you focus on most often?" These results are presented in Table 2.D..

Table 2.D.

Teacher Response to Teacher Interview Question 5

Component	yes	no	yes	no
	Site A		Site B	
brainstorming	3	0	3	0
pre-writing	3	0	2	1
first draft	3	0	0	3
editing/revisions	3	0	2	1
publishing	2	1	1	2

The responses reflect that various teachers weigh certain portions of writing more important than others. All of the teachers focused on brainstorming with their students. Five out of six teachers focused on pre-writing as well. After the first two components the focus varied. The students began the study with having various levels of experiences with the above components.

The next question focused on the teachers' perceptions of writing in their classroom. Question number six asked, "What is the overall attitude on writing in your classroom?" Five out of the six teachers from Site A and B responded with an answer of positive. One teacher responded with the answer of neutral and no teachers responded to negative. There was a contradiction found with the positive opinions from the teachers in comparison to some of the negative attitudes of some of the students.

Motivation is the topic of the next question. Each teacher stated their opinion on whether motivation comes from within each student. The seventh question asked, "Do you feel that your students need more motivation to write?" The results are shown in Table 2.E..

Table 2.E.

Teacher Response to Teacher Interview Question 7

Sites	yes	somewhat	no
A	0	2	1
B	1	1	1

The results indicated that there was a difference of opinion when asked if they felt their students needed to be motivated to write. This information helped the researchers understand that motivation comes from within each child can vary from student to student. The differences were due to experiences and exposure to writing in their past education.

Each teacher uses an assortment of activities to teach writing in their classroom. Question number eight pertained to the various interventions that teachers use with their students. Question eight asked, "Which of the following writing interventions do you use in your classroom?" The findings are found in Table 2.F..

Table 2.F.

Teacher Response to Teacher Interview Question 8

Component	yes	no	yes	no
	Site A		Site B	
pen pals	3	0	2	1
teacher conferencing	3	0	2	1
writing portfolios	3	0	1	2
peer conferencing/editing	1	2	2	1
graphic organizers	3	0	3	0
writing prompts	3	0	2	1

The results from school A were consistent except for the peer conferencing/editing. This means that the students from Site A were exposed to the same interventions. On the other hand, Site B's teachers used different interventions in their classrooms. The students from school B were not exposed to similar interventions. Therefore, not all of the students would have similar writing experiences in school.

Parents were an important piece of this study. They were given an eight question survey, during the month of September to help understand what type of writing experiences each child had at home (Appendix D). The questions helped the researchers determine the level of understanding the parents had regarding writing and if the parents themselves needed additional information on the writing process.

Table 3.A.

Parent Writing Survey-September 2000

1. Does your child write at home beyond required homework?

	almost always	sometimes	almost never
Site A	5	14	3
Site B	6	16	5

2. Do you encourage your child to write at home?

	almost always	sometimes	almost never
Site A	6	15	1
Site B	9	15	3

3. Does your child enjoy writing letters, stories, poems, etc.?

	almost always	sometimes	almost never
Site A	6	11	5
Site B	5	17	5

4. Do you talk about your child's writing with him/her?

	almost always	sometimes	almost never
Site A	10	11	1
Site B	13	11	3

5. Do you enjoy writing letters, stories, poems, etc. at home?

	almost always	sometimes	almost never
Site A	3	12	7
Site B	9	13	5

6. Does your child see you writing at home?

	almost always	sometimes	almost never
Site A	5	14	3
Site B	10	13	4

7. Do you provide writing materials for your child?

	almost always	sometimes	almost never
Site A	22	0	0
Site B	19	4	4

8. Are you available to assist your child with rewriting if necessary?

	almost always	sometimes	almost never
Site A	22	0	0
Site B	20	5	2

The results from this parent survey are consistent between the two sites. In response to question one, 64 percent of the students from Site A sometimes write at home for pleasure. Similarly, 59 percent of the students from Site B also write at home sometimes. These results indicated that more than half of the students were using writing beyond school assignments.

When the parents were asked, in question two, if they encouraged their child to write at home, 68 percent of the parents from Site A replied to the answer of sometimes. While 56 percent of the parents from Site B responded the same. This information was utilized to discuss the importance of positive encouragement with the parents at Back to School Night.

Question three pertained to the enjoyment of letter writing, story writing, and poetry writing. Fifty percent of the parents of Site A replied with an answer of sometimes to this question. Comparably, 63 percent responded the same from Site B. This was valuable information because it exhibited the interest of writing besides homework.

The parents seemed to find discussing writing with their children a worthwhile experience. Ninety percent of the parents from Site A answered question four with an

always or sometimes. Meanwhile, 89 percent of the parents from Site B discussed their child's writing in the home. This information was vital to the writing process. It not only increased their knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses in writing but helped motivate them as well. The researchers gave parents helpful hints to aid in this process of writing by distributing a parent handbook during conferences (Appendices I, 0, R-S, X-HH).

Questions five and six pertained to the parents' writing habits and modeling writing for enjoyment in the home. Site A's parents averaged a percentage of 59 percent in the sometimes category, while Site B's parents averaged at 48 percent. This information gave insight about the relationship between the parents' enjoyment in writing verses the students' enjoyment in writing.

The majority of the parents answered almost always in questions seven and eight. All of the parents from Site A encouraged writing at home by providing materials for writing and were willing to assist their child with the rewriting process. On the other hand, Site B had 70 percent of the parents providing materials at home and 74 percent of the parents were assisting their child in rewriting. Research shows that if the teacher, parent, and child work and communicate together they can benefit the child's motivation and writing capabilities.

Table 4.A.

Student Writing Survey-September 2000

1. I like to write.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	5	13	4
Site B	5	14	8

2. I find it easy to write.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	8	11	3
Site B	4	19	4

3. I like how writing makes me feel inside.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	7	12	3
Site B	5	15	7

4. Writing helps me sort out my feelings.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	3	8	11
Site B	4	11	12

5. I think that writing is important.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	6	13	3
Site B	12	12	3

6. I like to write at school.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	6	12	4
Site B	5	17	5

7. I like to write at home.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	3	11	8
Site B	7	8	12

8. I am proud of what I write.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	12	10	0
Site B	7	18	2

9. I am good at sorting out my ideas and writing them on paper.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	6	13	3
Site B	9	13	5

10. I write different types of stories.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	9	10	3
Site B	15	7	5

11. I like when my teacher assigns a writing topic.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	5	8	9
Site B	6	10	11

12. I like when I choose my own writing topic.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	11	9	2
Site B	19	7	1

13. I am able to edit and revise my writing.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	9	10	3
Site B	7	14	6

14. I like when a classmate helps me edit and revise my writing.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	3	7	12
Site B	11	11	5

15. My parents help me edit and revise my writing.

	always	most of the time	hardly ever
Site A	12	10	0
Site B	5	15	7

The researchers administered a student writing survey to determine how writing was viewed in each child's life (Appendix E). Question one pertained to the students' enjoyment in writing. Twenty-four percent of the students from Site A and B responded that they hardly ever liked to write. When the researchers asked the students about the process of writing being easy, 12 percent, from both sites marked the hardly ever category on the survey. This information was used to find strategies that would help these students feel more at ease about the process of writing.

Feelings are the topic of questions three and four for the student survey. Fourteen percent of the students at Site A responded that writing hardly ever helped them sort out their feelings. At Site B, 26 percent responded with a hardly ever as well. When students were asked about if writing helped sort out their feelings, 50 percent of Site A replied with a hardly ever. Site B had 44 percent that answered hardly ever. These percentages were high. This information was to help find strategies that would

influence positive effects in writing.

The results from question five are consistent between the two sites. Most of the students found writing to be important. Three students from each site replied with a hardly ever response to the importance of writing. This averaged to one percent at both sites. A small percentage of students did not find writing important, but made an effort to reinforce the importance of writing to that small percentage.

Questions six and seven pertained to where the students enjoy writing. More of the students enjoyed writing in school instead of their home. Two percent of the students, from Site A and B, responded that they hardly ever liked writing at school. That percentage doubled when it came to writing in the home, at both sites. After the interventions, the students chose to write more during their free time.

The eighth question refered to the pride the students feel toward their writing. Zero of the children from Site A hardly ever had pride in their writing pieces. Site B's percentage was also extremely low, at a .07 percent. During the study, this was found to be a positive outcome.

Sorting out ideas onto paper was the topic of question nine. One percent of the students from Site A and B hardly ever thought they were good at sorting their ideas onto paper. When the students feel comfortable using various graphic organizers, this tool will help sort out ideas appropriately. When it comes to pre-writing, the students will have many methods to choose from to help plan out their piece of writing.

Question 10 asks the students if they write various types of stories. The results in the hardly ever category were low. One percent of the students from Site A answered hardly ever, while two percent answered the same at Site B.

Questions 11 and 12 were comparing teachers choosing writing assignments with students choosing their own writing topics. At Sites A and B, 41 percent of the students hardly ever liked the teacher choosing writing projects. Less than one

percent of the students hardly ever liked choosing their own topics. Students need to choose their own topics some of the time, but teachers must intervene when it is necessary.

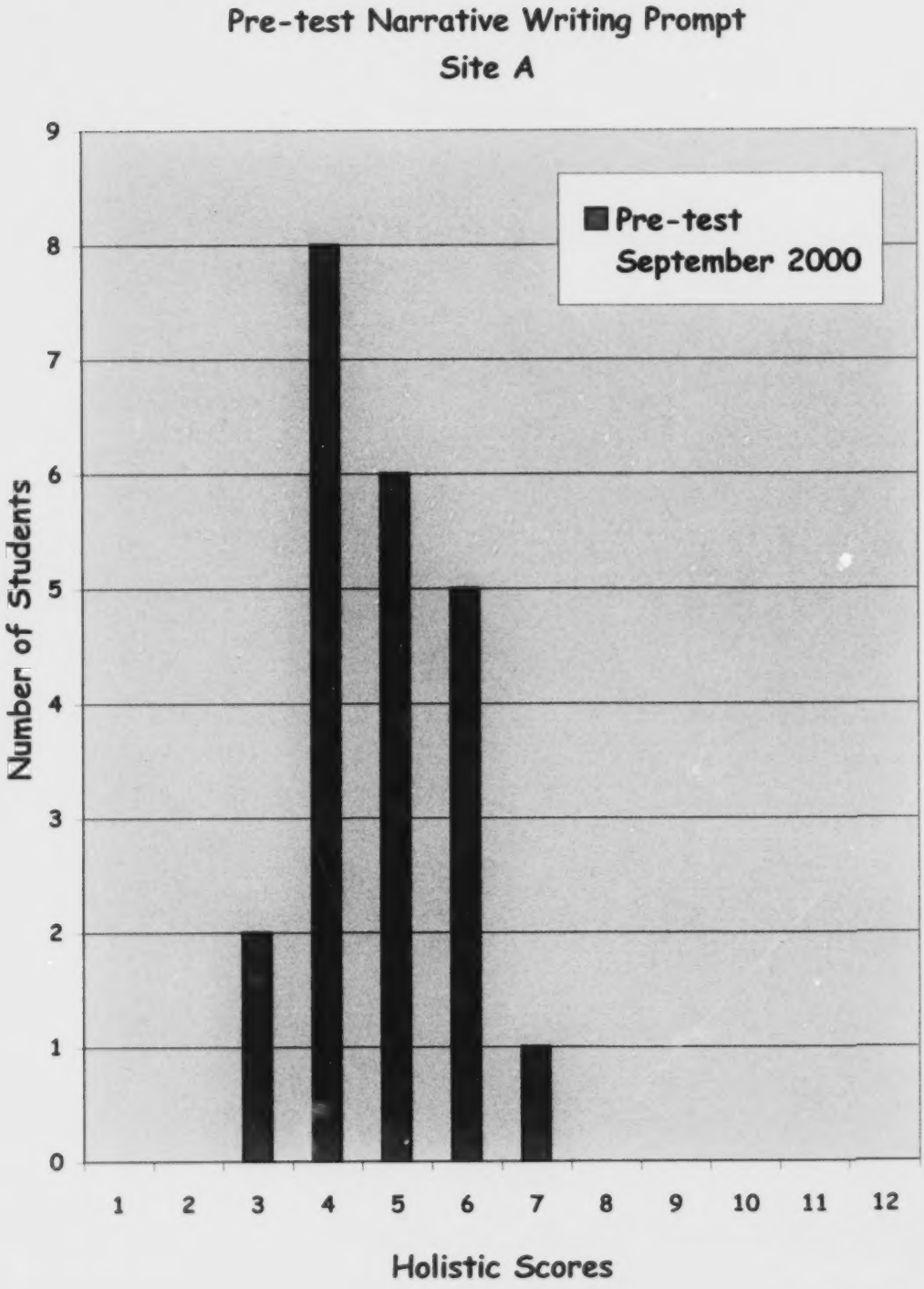
The last three questions on the student writing survey referred to editing. Number 13 asked students if they are able to revise their own writing. One percent of the students from Site A admitted to hardly ever being able to revise their own writing, while two percent of the students from Site B responded the same. Students may not be truthful or even truly understand what it means to self-edit. This means that the teacher will need to observe the students' self-editing skills and give them a worksheet that will help them check this process.

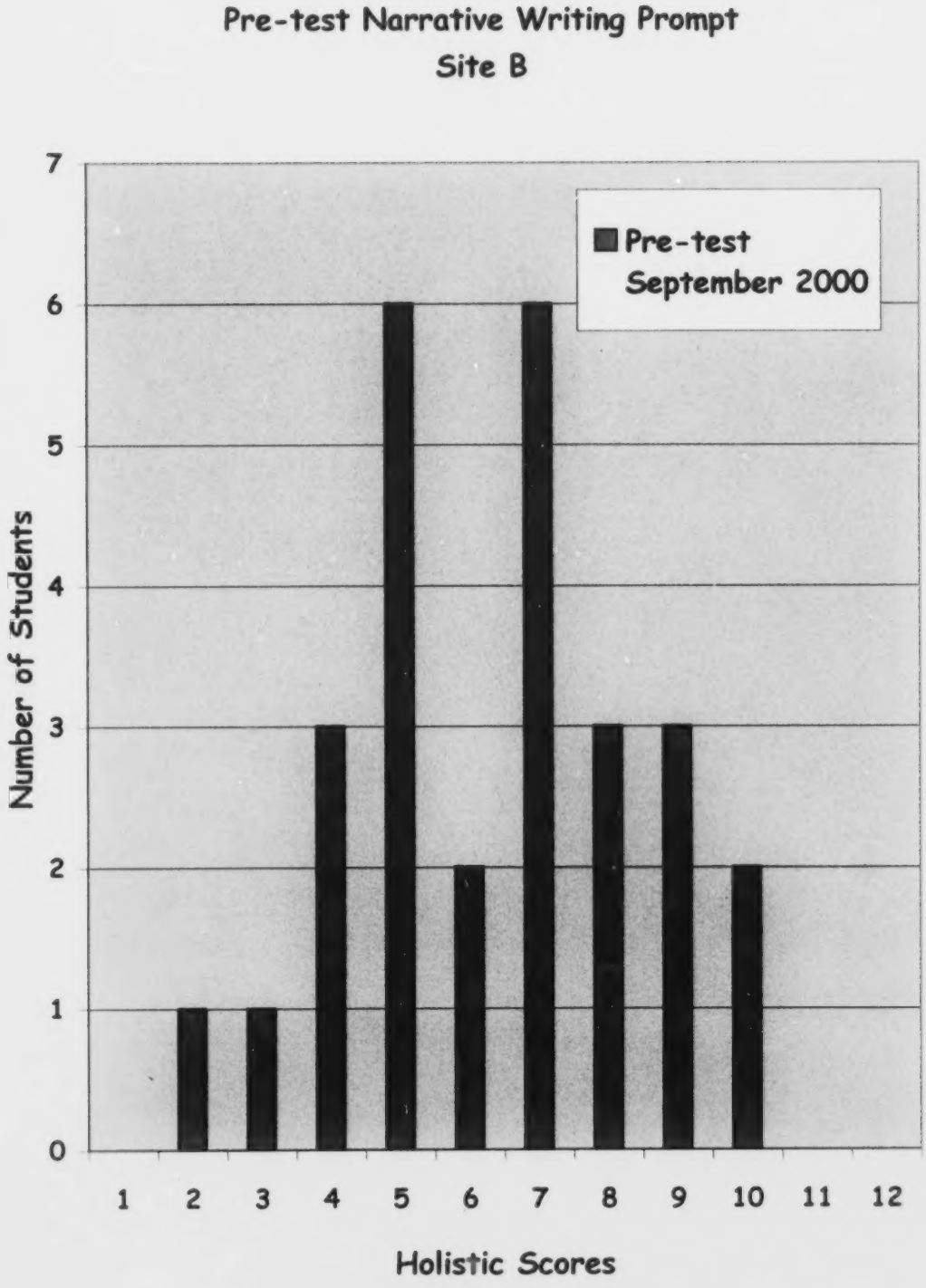
Classmates can help one another with revisions as well. Question number 14 refers to the classmates editing. Fifty-five percent of the students from Site A responded with a hardly ever when asked if they enjoy their peers editing their pieces of writing. Only two percent of the students from Site B responded with a hardly ever. The instructors will model and use a worksheet to help the students better understand partner editing.

Question number 15 asked the students if their parents help them edit and revise their papers. All of the parents from Site A helped their children edit their writing. Three percent of the students from Site B said their parents hardly ever helped revise their writing. The parents were better informed about how to help their children edit. The parents were given writing handbooks to help aid their children in the writing process.

To determine the students' writing ability levels, the researchers administered a pre-test narrative writing prompt (Appendix F). The children were asked to write to the following prompt: Write about one exciting time you experienced over this past summer. One of your experiences may include vacations, weddings,

family parties, sport camps, friends sleeping over, or even outdoor camping. Students were given a 35 minute time period to complete this essay.


Pre-test Narrative Writing Prompt
Site A
Pre-test
September 2000
Number of Students
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
Holistic Scores


Pre-test Narrative Writing Prompt
Site B
Pre-test
September 2000
Number of Students
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
Holistic Scores

The researchers found that the average score at Site A was a 4.8 combined total score. None of the students met state expectations of a total of eight points. At Site B the average score, on the narrative writing pre-test was a 5.9 combined total score. Nineteen students out of 27 did not meet state standards.

Although the students did not do well on the narrative pre-test, the researchers gathered information that would later benefit each student. It provided the researchers with specific facts on what the students needed to improve on in their writing. Improvements would include: brainstorming, organization, focus, paragraphing, details, elaboration, conventions, timeliness, and self-editing skills.

Once the essays were completed, the researchers evaluated the essays by using the state's method of holistic scoring. There were two evaluators who scored each site's essays. Each evaluator gave the students a one, two, three, four, five, or six on their writing. One, two, and three did not meet state expectations, while four, five, and six did meet state expectations. These two scores were added together for a combined total score. The highest score possible was a 12, while, the lowest was a two.

Using the state standards, the evaluators kept these five writing components in mind while scoring the students' essays: Focus is the first component. The entire paper is focused on the subject of the writing prompt, and provides a clear main idea or point of view. The second is support/elaboration. Support is the degree to which the main point or position is supported and explained by specific details and reasons. Organization is the third component. This is the clarity of the logical flow of ideas and the explicitness of the text structure or plan. The fourth writing component entails the proper use of conventions. This includes proper grammatical conventions including spelling, punctuation, and capitalization appropriate for each grade level. Integration is the final writing component considered while holistically scoring. This is when the

student's paper exhibits unity in presentation of ideas.

As the students move from one grade level to another, each teacher keeps a few pieces of writing in that child's cumulative writing folder. The teachers who follow may review these writing folders to better understand what each child already knows about writing and what the child needs to improve on during the next year. This is what the researchers used these folders for during their study.

The teachers took specific notes on each child's writing. Each teacher looked for understanding of paragraphing, organization, and conventions. They also observed what types of writing were worked on throughout their school career. The teachers found that most of the pieces in their cumulative folders were problem/solution narratives. This meant that the teachers had to introduce and practice persuasive and expository writing with all students. Furthermore, time needed to be spent on conventions, paragraphing, transitions, better beginnings, details in writing, and wording in general. The teachers also realized that each student needed individual help on specific problems that they were having with writing.

A teacher writing observation checklist was created and completed by each teacher (Appendix G). The teacher walked around the room observing their students as they wrote their narrative writing pre-test. Observing one student at a time, the teacher looked for graphic organizer use, writing promptness, correct use of capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphing.

Table 6.A.

Teacher Writing Checklist September 2000

Questions:	Yes		No	
	Site A	Site B	Site A	Site B
1. Did the student begin the writing process by using a graphic organizer?	4	2	18	25
2. Did the student begin writing immediately after the writing prompt was presented?	17	26	5	1
3. Did the student use capitalization?	20	23	2	4
4. Did the student use punctuation?	19	24	3	3
5. Did the student understand paragraphing?	0	12	22	15

Some results were consistent between the two sites and some questions varied. Question number one pertained to the use of a graphic organizer. Eighty-two percent of the students from Site A did not use any form of a graphic organizer, while 93 percent of the students from Site B did not use one either. This information lead the focus on the many uses of graphic organizers. The more the students are aware of the various graphic organizers the more likely they are to use one prior to writing.

In question number two, the teachers were observing to see if the students began writing immediately after the prompt was given. Seventy-seven percent of the students from Site A began writing immediately, while 96 percent of Site B also began writing immediately. The researchers took each individual student's essay and looked to see how focused their writing was in correlation with their quick start and no graphic organizer use. The teacher would then conference and recommend new strategies to each individual student.

The next two questions, three and four, pertained to capitalization and punctuation. The majority of the students did well in these two categories. Ninety-one percent of the students from Site A used capitalization appropriately, and 85 percent of Site B used capitalization as well. In question four, 86 percent of Site A used punctuation properly, while 89 percent of Site B also used punctuation properly. With this information, the researchers decided to individually help students with capitalization and punctuation during during conference time. Whole class discussions and teaching could be focused on other writing topics.

Question number five focused on the understanding of paragraphing. The two Sites had contrasting results. One hundred percent of the students did not understand paragraphing from Site A. On the contrary 55 percent of the students from Site B did not understand paragraphing. This was a topic that the third grade teacher needed to spend time introducing and developing throughout the year. The fifth grade teacher would review this with her or his students and then follow up during individual conference time.

The last piece of evidence that the researchers used to help determine what interventions would need to be used were the standardized district scores from the state achievement tests. The students were given 35 minutes to write a narrative, persuasive, or expository essay. Each third and fifth grade student would need to determine which format would be the best to use after reading the prompt given by the state.

After looking at the district scores as a whole, the students did well in comparison to the state scores. There were four levels that students could fall under: Level One was academic warning, Level Two was below standards, Level Three was meets standards, and Level Four was exceeds standards. Two percent of the third graders in the district received a Level Two on their writing exam and two students

were in academic warning. Less than one percent of the fifth graders in the district received a Level Two on their writing exam and no students were in academic warning.

According to the state, the district did well on their writing exams. Sixty-four percent of the students met state expectations, and 26 percent exceeded state expectations. The school district and community would like to see more of their students exceeding state expectations. This testing information was used to better understand what components of writing the students needed to improve upon. Adjustments were made and new methods were added to their writing instruction to improve confidence in writing. Hence, higher levels of confidence yielded better test scores.

Probable Causes

In analyzing the data, it was evident that the targeted third and fifth grade classes lack confidence in writing, which interfered with their overall writing achievement. Many students were challenged with one or various probable causes. These causes were gathered from parent, student, and teacher surveys, interviews, tests, and teacher observations.

After receiving and analyzing the parent surveys, it was found that information was inconsistent from home to home. The parents played a vital role in their child's education, especially when it comes to writing. The parents from Sites A and B were asked if they encouraged their child to write at home. More than half of the parents, from both sites, responded with a sometimes. According to Pickhardt (2000), it is the parents' responsibility to encourage their children to develop a positive self-esteem towards writing.

Another question on the survey asked the parents if they enjoyed writing letters, stories, and or poems. Close to fifty percent of the parents replied with a sometimes.

In order for children to be successful in their writing, the parents should play an active role in modeling writing (Graves & Stuart,1985).

Children's attitudes and enjoyment toward writing was another probable cause. "As children move from grade to grade, their attitude toward writing generally worsens" (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, Ambrosio, 2000, p. 15). The students from Sites A and B were asked, on the survey, if they liked to write. More than 50 percent of the students responded with a most of the time and more than 20 percent responded with a hardly ever. The students were also asked if writing was important to them. About 50 percent of the students responded with most of the time and 12 percent responded with a hardly ever. There was a link between motivation and literature learning and this was reason alone for probable cause (Turner & Paris, 1995).

The previous teachers gave the researchers many reasons for probable cause. Students need many opportunities during their day to write in various ways throughout their curriculum (Zaragoza & Vaughn, 1995). The teachers at Sites A and B were asked how many minutes they allocated towards writing daily. Each teacher spent a different amount of minutes per week on writing. This concluded that students at both sites received a wide range of writing instruction the previous year.

In another interview question, the previous teachers were asked if they felt trained to teach the three types of writing. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers felt they were somewhat or not at all trained to teach the three types of writing. This concluded that each child received a different type of experience with writing, depending on his or her teacher's knowledge and confidence. "Teachers face an uphill battle as they attempt to foster positive writing attitudes in their students" (Kear, Coffman, McKenna, Ambrosio, 2000, p.15).

Confidence played a significant role in writing. The previous teachers were given a survey that indicated which students displayed confidence and which students

did not. At Site A, 52 percent of the students did not display confidence, and at Site B 66 percent of the students did not display confidence. The researchers found this to be a significant probable cause in their study. A child's self perception of their own writing is vital to their development in the writing process (Bottomley, Henk, and Melnick, 1997-1998).

The next probable cause was the low scores on the pre-test narrative writing prompt. Each student was given the same writing prompt. They had 35 minutes to complete their essays. None of the students from Site A met state expectations, which would have been a combined score of eight. The average score at Site A was a 4.8 combined score. Performing slightly better, the students from Site B had a combined total score of 5.9. Furthermore, 19 students out 27 did not meet state expectations either. All in all, this was a probable cause for the researchers to perform this study.

According to Frank (1995), children need to organize their thoughts prior to writing. The organizational tool can be a simple map or web. It is not necessary to utilize some intricate pattern, because the purpose of this step in writing is to prepare the author to write (Frank, 1995). Organizing was not part of the plan for the majority of the students from Sites A and B. Eighty-two percent from Site A did not use a graphic organizer, while 93 percent of the students from Site B did use a tool.

The literature and probable causes from Sites A and B proved the reason for this study. Students lacked confidence in writing and this interfered with their overall writing achievement. These probable causes included: lack of positive reinforcement and interaction at the home, lack of student confidence and motivation, lack of time devoted to teaching writing, lack of professional teacher training, lack of exposure to the various types of writing and its process, and lack of consistency with writing instruction. All of these components were part of the reason that students lacked confidence which interfered with the students' writing success.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Throughout this literature study, it has become evident that creating an environment where children feel safe and unthreatened at home and at school can help the children share their innermost thoughts and feelings through writing (Capacchione, 1982). Most importantly, creating an atmosphere of sharing will motivate children to read and write for each other (Graves & Stuart,1985). When children are able to speak from their creative selves freely, basic educational skills can be developed easily and naturally (Capacchione,1982). Parents, children, and teachers must work together to accomplish full writing potential in all students.

Evidence has proven that when parents play an active role in their child's education the child will make significant gains. Parents must be a good role model for their child. Parents who read and write, in the presence of their children, demonstrate enjoyment and the process that is taken when reading and writing. Reading and writing should be part of the parents' daily lives and should be a special and entertaining part of playtime with children (Graves & Stuart, 1985).

There are various daily activities, in which a family may take part, that are similar to the writing process. Such activities include painting, repairing cars, writing computer programs, playing an instrument, training horses, cooking from scratch, or

even shopping for clothes. Parents need to help their children see the parallel relationships that exist in the writing process and the above activities. Children may miss the comparisons unless parents draw attention to the writing process. Some similarities include the need for creating unexpected ideas, interesting alternatives, accepting failure, and being persistent (Graves & Stuart, 1985).

An essential beginning to the writing process at home begins with various media surrounding the child. Parents can supply pencils, pens, crayons, journals, diaries, construction paper, and notebook paper with the children's other toys. These writing tools should be accessible to the children at all times. "The more they trip over them, the more inclined they are to use them" (Graves & Stuart, 1985).

Writing opportunities should not be restricted to playtime only. Daily chores, errands, and activities can impact children in learning to read and write. Children can write at home by writing labels, signs, notes, letters, and lists. A natural progression will include writing recipes and cooking, reading and writing shopping lists, and writing letters to family members and friends. Parents will create a successful writing environment when promoting writing naturally, as opposed to formal workbook lessons.

As children begin the writing process, parents need to respond in a natural manner. Parents should not feel that they must behave like an old-fashioned grammar teacher. They should first show interest by responding to their child's writing. Then parents should ask the writer questions relating to their piece without discouraging the writer. Questions should remain in a positive tone. For example, say, "This sentence confused me," rather than, "This sentence is a mess" or "I can't make this out," instead of, "This handwriting is atrocious!" By focusing on one problem at a time, parents can be a positive tool in their child's writing success.

Teachers are a very important part to the writing process and need to be dedicated in order to make it successful. "As teachers, we are aware that our students do not have the same interests and abilities and do not learn in the same way. However, all students have the potential to learn skills and develop their unique abilities" (Sejnost & Thiese, 2001, p. 37). The teacher can be the guide into the positive process called writing. To make this writing process successful, the teacher is responsible for implementing the following into their classroom: model the writing process, introduce various methods of graphic organizers, use rubrics for the writing process, complete teacher observation writing checklists, communicate with parents on the writing process, and organize a celebration for the success of the writing process.

It is essential for the teacher to be a good role model in the process of writing. Children find success in writing when they observe models of writing instead of being told what and how to write. Children will feel more confident about starting the writing process if they examine the procedure first. The continuous modeling of writing that occurs in the classroom will increase student writing. Their overall attitude towards writing will contribute to the effectiveness of the writing program (Tully, 1996).

Teachers can introduce the first step to the writing process by using a graphic organizer. Graphic organizers help students group all their thoughts and ideas collectively in a way that will help them visually connect their impressions together in writing. At this time, the writer needs to decide what organizational method will fit best with their ideas. These tools may be a chart, a web, a story board, an outline, a series of boxes, a diagram, a list, or a series of note cards. Connection between the child's brain and a visual organizer is vital in the beginning stages of writing (Frank, 1995). According to Merkley and Jefferies (2001), "Students need to systematically activate background knowledge in order to make the necessary connections for learning to

occur" (p. 350).

A rubric can help guide the teacher in the instruction of writing and in the grading process. Using a rubric can serve as a model of what to work towards to improve student writing. The students will be clear on what the teacher is expecting from each piece of writing (Frank, 1995). Once the students have a clear understanding of the required components, they will generate better work (Fiderer, 1999). Teachers will find rubrics helpful when scoring pieces of writing. Rubrics can help examine specific writing skills with distinct criteria and numerical scores (Frank, 1995). The students will find rubrics valuable when they connect evaluation and learning (Fiderer, 1999).

One excellent way to involve students in the assessment process is through self-assessment checklists. The self-assessment checklists are designed to correlate with each rubric. Students will use these checklists to self- and peer-assess. This process will aid students in achieving their writing potential. Teachers can model the process of self-assessment by using a checklist to evaluate their own writing piece. This can be done by demonstrating this process as the teacher thinks aloud (Fiderer, 1999).

It is the responsibility of the teacher to communicate the progress of each student's writing to the parents. To help in this communication, the parents are also given a writing handbook to aid in the journey of their child's writing experience. As teachers, we lead the parents and the children through this process by giving specific information to make this adventure a success. According to DeFina (1992), "Involving parents not only increases understanding of the aims of the writing program and garners support for it; such involvement also gives parents a fuller understanding of classroom activity and, in turn, they become more sensitive to the many ways in which their children learn" (p. 62).

One method of communication between the parent, teacher, and student is the PQP plan for responding and revising (Appendices H and I). The purpose of the PQP method is to learn about effective writing and progress to make improvements. The first P stands for praise. Writers and parents share with one another the strengths, what is positive and effective, what caught your attention, what shocked or pleased you, ect.? Writers and parents then ask questions (Q) to help the author think about their piece of writing. A question is asked to help guide the writer make their piece more clear. Questions can also be asked to help add, remove, or change what the author has already written. These first two steps are a part of the response tactics, and polish (P) is the final revision strategy. Because there are many suggestions made, the author needs to decide what changes need to occur to make their piece polished (Frank, 1995). This plan strengthens the message that writing is communication and writing has a purpose (Tully, 1996).

Teachers can celebrate the writing process with their students in several ways. The work and writing of the students can be displayed in the classroom or other visible places throughout the school. Another form of celebration is an Authors' Tea of some kind where parents and relatives are invited into the classroom to listen to the children's pieces of writing. This celebration honors each student and makes them feel positive about their writing (Tully, 1996).

Another way to celebrate children's writing is by having a portfolio exhibit. Parents, teachers, other students and administrators can be invited to this event. The key to this celebration is to signify their accomplishments and their growth as writers. The recognition of the students as fine writers will aid in their personal confidence in the writing process (Tully, 1996).

After parents and teachers role model and set the stage for success in writing, the students take an active part in the writing process. A sense of purpose in the

writing process is gained when a child can positively motivate his or her own performance and not give up the desire to try (Pickhardt, 2000). There are various ways to help motivate students and build confidence in their writing. Some of these activities include: goal setting, writing portfolios, writing journals, writing pen pals, student/teacher writing conferences, self/peer editing, sharing, reflecting, and finally publishing.

Goal setting is a very important piece to the positive process of writing. When a child sets a goal that is realistic the outcome will reaffirm their goal (Pickhardt, 2000). Each child has a writing folder where they can keep their personal writing goals on the writing planner (Appendix J). These goals may be daily or even weekly goals that are realistic to each individual. The students should ask themselves what they want to do next to become a better writer and how they will plan to work on their next piece? During their next writing process, the teacher can help generate possible goals that each individual student should strive to attain (Hansen, 1996).

"Portfolios are the best thing to happen to writing since the discovery of process writing. Doing portfolios is a process... writing is a process... and the two processes just blend together as nicely as hot fudge mixing in with melting ice cream. The two form a natural partnership that does wonders for writing instruction, writing improvement, and writing assessment" (Frank, 1995).

A writing portfolio is an excellent way to gain an ongoing view of a child's work over a period of time that shows writing achievement, efforts, growth, and attitudes (Rubin,1995). The students take ownership of their writing portfolios by decorating binders and making their portfolios personal. Furthermore, a variety of writing pieces are selected, by the student, to add to their portfolio. By allowing the students to have choice, the portfolios become a positive reflection of themselves as a writer (Tully, 1996).

When a child chooses a piece(s) for their portfolio, it is important for the student to reflect on why the piece or pieces were selected (Tully, 1996). First, students reflect on their piece(s) and the process of writing by looking back at what goals were met. Next students set new goals for future pieces of writing. These reflection worksheets will be placed in their portfolio, prior to their selected piece of writing, with an explanation of why this piece was chosen (Tully, 1996).

Although portfolios are personal collections, the pieces of writing, reflections, and successes should be celebrated with others (Tully, 1996). "The key element in all of this is to give recognition to our students for the fine writing that they have done and to mark this milestone in their growth as writers" (Tully, 1996).

Another way to motivate students in writing is by journaling. A journal is like a diary of events or a way students can express themselves daily (Rubin, 1995). Personal journal writing makes learning tangible, intimate, and alive for the individual student. It is a way for children to express themselves free of critiques and grades, which often cause resistance to writing (Capacchione, 1989).

Students seem to be easily engaged into sharing their thoughts and ideas with their journals. Stimulation also occurs during this thought process of what they are doing, why they are writing on a topic, and how they are doing it (Rubin, 1995). By journaling, the students will learn about themselves. As Pat Wolf stated, "Information is more likely to be attended to and remembered if it has meaning to the student and contains an emotional hook" (Conference, 1999). They can try out their convictions, share feelings, ask questions, examine their fears, vent issues, and clear their heads to allow learning to occur (Frank, 1995). Thus, they encouraged this by metacognition (Rubin, 1995). Private writing allows the students to take risks that they would not take anywhere else (Frank, 1995).

Taking the time to share journals with others has many benefits. The students are able to choose which feelings they want to share and still keep some private. Shy students will find this beneficial, because they can express themselves through characters in their stories and receive feedback from their peers without judgment. Finally, sharing journals is an effective way to practice listening and speaking skills (Simpson, 1993).

Journal sharing is a good way for students to generate new ideas for their writing pieces. It gives them an opportunity to hear about what other students are writing and helps them endure confidence towards their own writing abilities. Students need the joyous feeling that a writer receives when sharing their writing makes others laugh, cry, or leaves them bewildered (Simpson, 1993).

Another way to share writing is by having a pen pal to write and partake in the writing process. Communication through pen pal writing is a form of sharing with other students that are not at the same school and not sharing the same experiences. This gives each student an unbiased opinion of their writing and their feelings. It helps build better self-esteem and fosters a positive image of themselves as a writer. This positive input produces more authentic writing (Frank, 1995).

Writing conferences are an important part of the writing process and in helping build confidence in each student. One-on-one conferencing will establish trust and create a safe environment between student and teacher (De Fina, 1992). It is time for a conference when a child needs assistance on their piece or is stuck on a portion of his or her writing. A conference is also appropriate when the student is excited or proud of a particular piece that has been written. This process can help in the attainment of goal achievement (Rubin, 1995).

Having this one-on-one communication with a teacher can improve the child's motivation to write. This is an opportunity for the student to receive constructive

criticism and positive feedback from their teacher in a non-threatening setting. Each student wants to feel like an author and their teacher can be the audience for that piece of writing. The student is looking for the teacher to enhance their writing, not change it. Each child wants to be in control of where that piece is going and how it will end. This conferencing time with the teacher allows the child to feel good about oneself as a writer (Tully, 1996).

Students can learn a tremendous amount from each other about writing. Through peer editing children can learn how to compliment, how to suggest changes that need to be made, and how to correct errors in the work of others (Maifair, 1999). These three steps can be used to aid the peer editor: praise, question, and polish (Frank, 1995). As these steps are used the writer will become more self confident, will strengthen one's writing abilities, and will increase writing skills. The more active the students become in the process of peer editing, the greater impact they will have on each other's writing (Maifair, 1999).

The final and most crucial step in the writing process is publishing. Publishing a piece of writing reveals the importance of the author and his or her piece. Children should have the opportunity to share each finished product of their choice (Frank, 1995). Having a real audience will give purpose to each writer and his or her piece. Going through the steps of the writing stages; pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing makes this process meaningful and purposeful (Kellaher, 1999).

When a student shares his published piece he is communicating through the process of sharing. The method of presenting, hearing, and publishing a piece of writing provides the writer with a clear image of one's work and influences future writing pieces. An author has a purpose and motivation when creating a piece to share with others (Frank, 1999).

Creating an atmosphere of sharing is an excellent way to learn about what works, what doesn't work, and which devices produce good writing. As children write and publish they become more conscious and concerned about grammatical mistakes and plunge forward to improve their skills. The fulfillment of a finished product aids in the writer's motivation. When acquiring positive feedback from an audience the writer builds self-esteem. The students gain self respect which enables them to feel proud of themselves as writers (Frank, 1999).

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND PROCESSES

After reviewing the literature on the lack of student confidence which interferes with their overall writing achievement, the researchers formulated the following project objectives:

As a result of increased parent and teacher interventions on gaining student confidence in writing, during the period of September 2000 to February 2001, the third and fifth grade students from the targeted classes will improve their self-esteem in writing, as measured by teacher constructed pre- and post-writing prompts, pre- and post-student/parent surveys, and review of student writing portfolios.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Teachers and parents will become more knowledgeable about various ways to increase motivation and writing skills and implement specific strategies to help students gain confidence in writing.
2. Communication between teacher, parent, and student will be a helpful tool in building writing self-esteem.

Project Action Plan

I. August

A. Previous teacher interview and survey

B. Parent permission slip

C. Distribute parent survey

D. Parent letter requesting portfolio binder

E. Administer student survey

II. September

A. Complete teacher observation writing checklist

B. pre-test writing prompt will be administered and holistically scored

C. Work on introductory writing pieces and journal writing

D. Create portfolio covers

E. Begin publishing and collecting writing pieces for portfolio

F. Write letters to pen pals

G. Create writing folders containing goals, planner and proofreading marks

H. Begin peer editing process with the class/PQP (Praise, Question, Polish)

I. Begin Friday letters to parents regarding the writing process and goals

J. Begin weekly teacher/student conferencing about writing

K. Back-to-School Night with parents explaining writing program

L. Meet with in-school writing buddies

III. October

A. Introduce various types of graphic organizers

B. Introduce narrative writing

C. Collect various narrative writing pieces for their portfolio

D. Continue writing folders, conferencing, and peer editing

E. Write letter to pen pals about writing

F. Parent/teacher conferences

G. Distribute Parent Writing Handbook to parents

H. Meet with in-school writing buddies

IV. November

A. Introduce more types of graphic organizers

B. Introduce persuasive writing

C. Write another letter to pen pals about writing

D. Continue writing folders, conferencing, and peer editing

V. December

A. Introduce expository writing

B. Write another letter to pen pals about writing

C. Continue to peer edit, teacher/student conference, and communicate with parents

D. Continue writing folders, conferencing, and peer editing

VI. January/February

A. Post-parent and post-student surveys given

B. Celebration with pen pals to discuss and share writing portfolios

C. Post-test writing prompt will be administered and holistically scored

D. Review various types of graphic organizers and their appropriate uses

E. Review narrative, persuasive, and expository writing types

F. Complete teacher observation writing checklist

G. Share portfolios with parents

H. Student and parent reflection on portfolios

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, several forms of assessment will be given and reviewed. The first intervention that will be administered will be the previous teacher survey. Each of the previous year's teachers will write the strengths and weaknesses of their students as well as any additional comments. The previous year's teachers will also participate in a one-on-one interview. A variety of questions will be asked regarding the use of the writing process in their classrooms.

The next intervention will include a parent survey. Parents will take part in responding to the writing that takes place in their home. The parents are asked to respond on how they play an active role in encouraging their child to write. When the study is completed the parents will reassess their thoughts and feelings regarding their child and the writing process at home.

Prior to the study, the students will complete a survey concerning their attitudes towards writing. At this time, the students will reflect upon how they feel about themselves as writers. In addition, the students will ponder on how they use writing at home and at school.

As part of the assessment process, a pre- and post-writing prompt will be given to each student during an allotted time frame. This piece should be written in a narrative format with five paragraphs. The first paragraph is the introduction, the middle paragraphs are the body, and the final paragraph is the conclusion.

Throughout the course of this study, the students will be compiling various writing pieces into a portfolio. The teacher and parents have two jobs to complete: observing and reflection. The students will use their portfolios to reflect and make improvements in their writing.

As part of the writing process, the teacher and students will conference on various pieces of writing and their journals. During each conference the students will discover and discuss their strengths and what needs to be improved upon in that piece of writing. General comments and observations will be reviewed while conferencing with the journal and other pieces of writing.

Furthermore, peers will play an active role in the assessment in each child's writing development. Students will use a checklist to guide each student with praise and questions. This format is called PQP (Praise, Question, Polish). Each student must have one other peer complete this checklist for each piece of writing.

Students will be given several opportunities to enhance their writing skills throughout the year. Various prompts, which include narrative, persuasive, and expository, will be given to the students to journey through the writing process. The teacher will observe and guide the students through this process.

In correlation with our state scoring system, we will develop writing/scoring rubrics (Appendices K and L). These rubrics will guide the students with their writing and aid the teacher with grading each piece. The paper is broken down into several categories that will help the teacher focus on each skill. The categories fall under organization, conventions, focus, elaboration, support, and integration.

To assess the effects of the pen pal program, the students responded to their initial feelings about receiving letters and cards from their pen pals. They will place their feelings in their personal journals. The teacher will then record the feelings during a writing conference.

All these components together will help the teachers assess the impact that this writing study has made on each child.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to improve student confidence in writing in two regular education third and fifth grade classrooms. This writing program focused on the student, teacher, and parent all working closely together to promote a positive writing experience. Various strategies were implemented to increase student motivation and confidence towards writing. In addition, surveys were given to previous teachers, students, and parents, as well as, pre- and post-writing assessments. Frequent parent communication was essential to achieve the desired results.

August: Sites A and B

During the first week of implementation of the action research project, a letter was sent to the targeted students and previous teachers explaining their past roles with the components of the writing program (Appendix A). The teachers were asked to complete a survey on the students they had the previous year (Appendix B). The survey was used to determine if the students exhibited confidence in writing, any strengths or weaknesses in their writing ability, and any additional comments that would be helpful to the researchers. In addition, the researchers conducted an interview with each teacher (Appendix C). It consisted of eight questions related to

each teacher's feelings towards writing and how they incorporate writing into their classroom daily.

Parent contact in the form of a letter was sent home during the first week of the action plan (Appendix M). The purpose of the letter was to inform the parents of the intentions of the writing program for the project. The researchers also needed to obtain permission from the parents for their son/daughter to participate in the program. In addition, a parent survey was sent home as well. The parents were asked various questions regarding the writing atmosphere created at home. In addition, the students were each asked to bring in a binder. This portfolio was used to collect their individual writing pieces throughout the entire year. The researchers sent a second letter (Appendix N) to the parents requesting students to bring a three-ring binder to school to serve as their child's writing portfolio. The students created a cover for their portfolio which made it unique and their own. Included in each portfolio was a collection of writing pieces that each child had completed throughout the school year.

The researchers administered a writing survey to each student (Appendix E). This survey was used to determine the students' feelings about writing. It consisted fifteen questions and took approximately 15 minutes to administer. The fifteen statements were read to the students by the researchers. Each item presented a brief, simply-worded statement about writing followed by three answer choices: always, most of the time, hardly ever.

September: Sites A and B

A writing pre-test was administered to all students (Appendix F). This consisted of a written narrative writing prompt which was identical for all students. Each child was given a timed period of 35 minutes to complete their writing piece. The students were asked to write about one exciting time they experienced over the past summer.

They were given the opportunity to use the paper with the writing prompt for any pre-writing activities before they began to write on a separate piece of paper. The researchers holistically scored each paper, giving it a single number between one and six, one being the lowest score and six the highest. The two scores of the two researchers were added together giving the paper a final score between two and twelve. Then the scores were graphed so they could later be compared to the post test.

While the students were engaged in the pre-test, the researchers completed a writing checklist on each child. There were five questions that required a yes or no response from the researchers. Each question pertained to the writing process. The researchers wanted to know if each child began the process by creating a graphic organizer. They also wanted to know if the children began the process immediately after the prompt was given. Finally, the researchers observed each child to see if the use of capitalization, punctuation, and paragraphs were present.

Each child had his own writing folder that was used during Writer's Workshop. Included in each folder was a proofreading/editing marks sheet that each child could refer to when editing their own or a partners writing piece (Appendix O). The children also had their own weekly writing planner, which helped them set writing goals each day. The title of each piece was written on the planner for the week along with the daily goals for that specific writing piece. The teacher, student, and parent would then add any comments for that particular piece at the bottom of the planner. A writing checklist was the final article found in the writing folder (Appendix P). This worksheet was to aid in the progress of each piece of writing from start to completion. The student was responsible for this checklist. As they went through each step of the writing process they would check off that specific task. This approach helped each child with organization and the complete process of writing.

Every piece that the child had written had gone through the entire writing process and was placed in their respective writing portfolios. The writing process began by brainstorming ideas about the given topic (Appendix Q). The children may have used a graphic organizer to help organize their thoughts and ideas. A first draft is was written and the students edited their papers using the writing/editing checklist (Appendices R and S). Each child signed up for a conference with the teacher to review and revise their piece. The teacher kept a writing conference binder to write down any information pertaining to that child's writing techniques and skills. The teacher was able to keep a detailed log on each child's writing piece and writing ability (Appendix T). Following the conference, the students made any needed corrections and finally a published piece was written. This final piece of writing was placed in their year long cumulative portfolio.

After the children published their pieces, they got together with a partner and completed a PQP (Praise, Question, and Polish) (Appendices H and I). Each child read his partner's writing piece and reflected on it by praising, questioning, and polishing the work.

The students at Sites A and B were paired up with one another to create a year-long pen pal adventure. The researchers decided which students would be a match for each other based on gender, personality, and academic ability. Each month the students wrote a letter to their pen pals. After receiving the letters, the students were to reflect on how they felt after they read their letters. In their writing journals, the children simply drew a thumbs-up sign, a sideways-thumb, or a thumbs-down sign indicating how they felt about their experience. A thumbs-up experience meant that it was a positive experience. A sideways-thumb meant that pen pals was a neutral experience. A thumbs-down meant that the students had a negative experience.

Both sites began the school year with writing about similar topics. The goal of the researchers was to create a connection between the students so when they finally met, there would be a commonality. Each site began the year by creating a bio poem (Appendix U). This bio poem consisted of information that helped each student express their interests to the peers. The lines of this poem included: name, adjectives that described student, if they had siblings, what they loved, how they felt, what they feared, what they liked to see in life, and their residence. As the students created their bio poem they were able to get their thoughts and ideas about themselves on paper, as well as, using it as a tool to share with their classmates and pen pals.

In addition to the bio poem, each child created a window description piece. Each child chose either a summer or fall image that was prevalent in one's mind and drew it in the window pane. After drawing the scene, each child wrote a paragraph describing the picture using adjectives, details, and figurative language. Once everyone was finished, the teacher hung up all of the window panes. The teacher read each description and the students were to choose which picture fit the description. This piece was included in the student's writing portfolio.

Each site also began the year with narrative writing. The students were introduced to the style of narrative pieces and began to write personal stories about themselves. These stories included specific details and feelings about one particular event. The children were given the opportunity to use a graphic organizer to arrange their thoughts and ideas (Appendices V and W). Each piece went through the entire writing process before producing a final piece. These stories are included in their writing portfolios and are shared with their classmates and pen pals.

Each week the children were given an opportunity to show their creative side. The children had a notebook that was designated for their journal writing. The students were able to choose a topic of their choice and write about it. This allowed

the children to exhibit their own creativity while writing about something that interests them. Each child had a variety of pieces in his journal and was given the chance to share his work with classmates and pen pals.

Weekly parent communication about each child's writing progress was essential to achieve the goal of the researchers. The writing planner that was included in each child's writing folder was sent home weekly (Appendix J). The parents were able to see what their children were writing about along with any goals the students made for themselves. Teacher comments were also included on the planner. Parents were encouraged to write comments or any feedback regarding their child's work. The researchers felt it was important to have open communication with the parents.

In September, each site held their annual Back-to-School Night with the parents. The researchers' project on effective strategies to improve and motivate student writing, as well as, the fact that writing was going to be a strong concentration throughout the curriculum this school year was explained to the parents. The researchers explained that their goals were to increase parent involvement with their child's writing, improve students' internal confidence, and add various teacher interventions to the curriculum. These strategies combined would improve students' overall writing achievement. I t was stressed the importance of parent involvement and parent, child, and teacher communication.

Another way to improve students' motivation in writing was by having in-school writing buddies. Each site was paired up with a younger grade at their school. Together the children, at both grade levels, worked on various reading and writing activities. This gave the third and fifth grade students the opportunity to assist their buddies with their writing skills. The third and fifth grade students met with their writing buddies on a monthly basis.

October: Sites A and B

During the month of October, the following activities from September were continued: writing folders, collecting writing pieces for the writing portfolio, the writing process, writing/editing checklists, PQP (Praise, Question, and Polish) reflections, teacher/student writing conferences, pen pal letters and reflections, narrative writing, journal writing, weekly parent communication, and in-school writing buddies.

Each October both sites participated in a semi-annual parent/teacher conference. During each conference, the child's academic and social progress was discussed along with informing the parents about the writing program in greater detail. Each parent was given a writing handbook to aid in the success of their child's writing process (Appendix X). Included in the handbook for both third and fifth grade were tips to help children become better and more confident writers (Appendix Y) and an explanation of the three types of writing (Appendix Z). Also, included in the third grade handbook was a guide to personal narrative writing (Appendix AA), a student friendly rubric for the three types of writing (Appendices BB and CC), a writing checklist for third grade (Appendix R), editing marks (Appendix O), and a list of words that must be spelled correctly by third graders (Appendix DD). Each fifth grade handbook also included the following: A guide to narrative, persuasive, and expository writing, (Appendices EE, FF and GG), a praise, question, polish/suggestion revision sheet for comments (Appendix I), an upper elementary editing checklist (Appendix S), and a word bank of 1200 high-frequency writing words (Appendices HH). This handbook provided each parent with the appropriate tools to aid in the writing process at home.

November: Sites A and B

During the month of November, the following activities from September and October were continued: writing folders, collecting writing pieces for the writing

portfolio, the writing process, writing/editing checklists, PQP reflections, teacher/student writing conferences, pen pal letters and reflections, narrative writing, journal writing, weekly parent communication and in-school writing buddies.

Persuasive writing was the second type of writing that was introduced. The children were exposed to a graphic organizer (Appendices II, JJ, and KK) to help arrange their thoughts and ideas. Then the students were taken through the entire writing process and finished with a completed persuasive piece.

December: Sites A and B

During the month of December, the following activities from September, October and November were continued: writing folders, collecting writing pieces for the writing portfolio, the writing process, writing/editing checklists, PQP reflections, teacher/student writing conferences, pen pal letters and reflections, narrative writing, journal writing, weekly parent communication, in-school writing buddies, and persuasive writing.

The third and final style of writing that was introduced was expository writing. Once again, the children were given a graphic organizer (Appendices LL and MM) to assist in organizing their thoughts and ideas. Students were taken through the entire writing process and ended with a completed expository writing piece.

January/February Sites A and B

During the months of January and February, the following activities from September, October, November and December were continued: writing folders, collecting writing pieces for the writing portfolio, the writing process, writing/editing checklists, PQP reflections, teacher/student writing conferences, pen pal letters and reflections, narrative writing, journal writing, weekly parent communication, in-school

writing buddies, persuasive and expository writing.

Prior to the state testing in third and fifth grades, the three types of writing, narrative, persuasive and expository were revisited. The use of graphic organizers and the writing process were focused on and reviewed.

A post-test was administered to all of the students at Sites A and B. The students were given another narrative writing prompt (Appendix NN) and a 35 minute time period to complete their writing pieces. The students were asked to write about a time in their life when they felt scared. If the students chose to, they were allowed to use the paper with the writing prompt for any pre-writing activities before they began to write on a separate piece of paper. While the students were working on their writing piece, the researchers completed another writing checklist on each child. Each writing piece was holistically scored by the researchers and the results were graphed so they may be compared to the pre-test scores.

The students from Sites A and B chose one piece of writing to submit to the area arts council, project for young writers. These pieces fell under four different categories: fiction: any subject, non-fiction: any subject (expository, essays, or articles), poetry: any subject, any style, and plays or scripts: any subject. Some students chose a piece from their portfolio, while others started fresh and new. All of the students from both sites submitted a piece to this project. This gave them a purpose to write.

A letter was sent home to the parents (Appendix OO) and the researchers requested that they complete a post-writing survey (Appendix PP). The parents were asked the same eight questions as the survey given in September with two additional questions. The researchers felt it was important to find out if the parents noticed a positive change, no change, or a negative change in their child's motivation towards writing and if they felt their child's writing as improved, stayed the same, or decreased. The parents were also given the opportunity to comment on any of the writing

experiences their child has had this year.

The researchers administered a post-writing survey to all of the students. The survey asked the same questions and required the same responses about the students' feelings towards writing as the survey previously given (Appendix E).

Working together with the parents to help their child grow as a writer was an ultimate goal of the researchers. Sharing and reflecting was an important component of the writing process. In order for the students to share their writing success, each child brought home his portfolio to share with one's parents. A letter was sent home to the parents and students explaining the components of the writing portfolios (Appendices QQ and RR). Included in each child's portfolio was a thoughts and goals reflection sheet that the students completed on the artifacts that were in their writing portfolios (Appendix SS). After the children shared their portfolios with their parents, the parents were asked to complete a PQP reflection sheet on their child's writing portfolio (Appendix TT).

As a culminating activity, the students from Sites A and B were finally able to meet one another during a writing celebration. The students from Site A traveled to their pen pal's school. A letter was sent home to Site A's parents informing them that their children would be traveling to another school within the district (Appendix UU). During the celebration, the pen pals were able to share their writing portfolios and writing journals with each other. The students also had the opportunity to read books and create stories together. Venn Diagrams were created by the students stating similarities and differences between the two schools and between the two pen pals. The children participated in a "Find a Pen Pal" search (Appendix VV). The third graders were to find fifth grade pen pals to fit certain categories and fifth graders had to find third grade pen pals. The celebration concluded with eating lunch, sharing treats and enjoying recess together.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of lack of confidence in writing, various pre- and post-assessment tools were utilized. These assessment tools included: the parent survey, student survey, post-test narrative writing prompt, observation checklist, and pen pal reflection.

At both Sites A and B, the parents were given a pre- and post-survey to complete about themselves and their children as writers. The teachers sent home the surveys with the students, and the parents sent them back to school when they were completed. Two questions were added to the post-survey. One pertained to the type of change they saw in their children's writing, up to the date of the survey. The second question asked if they felt their children's writing had improved throughout the study. In addition to the two questions, the parents were asked to write a brief narrative about their children's writing experiences. All of the other questions remained the same. The results of the per- and post-surveys are presented below.

Table 7.A.

Pre-Parent Writing Survey September 2000 and

Post-Parent Writing Survey February 2001

1. Does your child write at home beyond required homework?

	almost always		sometimes		almost never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	5	2	14	15	3	5
Site B	6	7	16	13	5	7

2. Do you encourage your child to write at home?

	almost always		sometimes		almost never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	6	5	15	17	1	0
Site B	9	6	15	17	3	4

3. Does your child enjoy writing letters, stories, poems, etc.?

	almost always		sometimes		almost never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	6	7	11	11	5	4
Site B	5	12	17	11	5	4

4. Do you talk about your child's writing with him/her?

	almost always		sometimes		almost never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	10	10	11	11	1	1
Site B	13	16	11	10	3	1

5. Do you enjoy writing letters, stories, poems, etc. at home?

	almost always		sometimes		almost never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	3	3	12	14	7	5
Site B	9	10	13	12	5	5

6. Does your child see you writing at home?

	almost always		sometimes		almost never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	5	3	14	17	3	2
Site B	10	10	13	15	4	2

7. Do you provide writing materials for your child?

	almost always		sometimes		almost never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	22	20	0	2	0	0
Site B	19	21	4	2	4	4

8. Are you available to assist your child with rewriting if necessary?

	almost always		sometimes		almost never	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	22	21	0	1	0	1
Site B	20	23	5	4	2	0

9. What type of change have you seen in your child's motivation towards writing thus far?

	positive change		no change		negative change	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A		16		6		0
Site B		13		14		0

10. Do you feel your child's writing has:

	improved		stayed the same		decreased	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A		19		3		0
Site B		17		10		0

All eight questions that were asked on the pre-survey had a slight change, but no difference that was large enough to evaluate. There were two questions added to the post-survey that carried a lot of value for the researchers. Question number nine referred to the change the parents had seen in their children's writing during the

implementations from the study. Seventy-three percent of the parents from Site A saw a positive change in their children's writing, while 49 percent of the parents from Site B saw a change as well. The researchers found this information to be worthwhile to their study. Not only was this change evident in the classroom, but the parents viewed these results at home through the writing portfolio.

On the second question added to the survey, the parents also found a positive change. Question number ten referred to what degree the parents thought their children had improved in writing. There was an overwhelming growth of 86 percent of the parents, at Site A, who felt their children's writing had improved throughout the study. Sixty-three percent of the parents from Site B documented an improvement in writing during the course of this project.

On the survey there was a section for the parents to comment on any aspect of the writing program thus far. Some parents chose not to write comments at all, while other parents gave a brief narrative. The comments from both sites were positive. Due to the grade level difference, the comments from Sites A and B varied in topic.

The parents at Site A commented on a variety of different aspects regarding the writing program. Some parents were pleased that their children used more description in their writing, and explored different types of writing. Parents commented on the various tools that were taught to aid the children in developing a writing piece. The children's content was more structured and organized. Most parents observed that their children had a better understanding of the writing process. The emphasis on editing and revising was stressed upon as a positive part of the program. In addition, conventions, such as, capitalization, punctuation, and complete sentence usage had improved in the children's writing. A few parents replied that their children had been more motivated to write, while only one said his child still needed a lot of encouragement.

At Site B, the parents focused on the positive changes that they witnessed their children transcend through their fifth grade experience. Many of the parents referred to the writing portfolio, where they experienced first hand the changes that occurred throughout the year. Comments varied from "now keeping a journal or a diary" to "now eagerly sharing their writing on a constant basis." Other parents wrote that their children recently started to correspond with their family and friends by using the Internet. Many parents also commented on their children's enthusiasm about writing. The children had become aware of all the steps of the writing process and were able to let their imaginations flow. Overall, this program seemed to be beneficial to most of the students from Sites A and B.

The findings of the pre- and post-student writing survey (Appendix E) are presented in Table 8.A.. The pre-test was given in September and an identical post-test was administered in February. The questions on this survey focused on student's view of writing, his/her level of enjoyment, and the student's level of confidence. These results are presented in Table 8 below.

Table 8.A.

Pre-Student Writing Survey September 2000 and

Post-Student Writing Survey February 2001

1. I like to write.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	5	6	13	13	4	3
Site B	5	11	14	14	8	2

2. I find it easy to write.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	8	10	11	11	3	1
Site B	4	7	19	18	4	2

3. I like how writing makes me feel inside.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	7	8	12	8	3	6
Site B	5	6	15	18	7	3

4. Writing helps me sort out my feelings.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	3	2	8	11	11	9
Site B	4	7	11	10	12	10

5. I think that writing is important.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	6	13	13	7	3	2
Site B	12	16	12	9	3	2

6. I like to write at school.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	6	10	12	10	4	2
Site B	5	7	17	17	5	3

7. I like to write at home.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	3	3	11	8	8	11
Site B	7	12	8	8	12	7

8. I am proud of what I write.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	12	14	10	6	0	2
Site B	7	11	18	13	2	3

9. I am good at sorting out my ideas and writing them on paper.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	6	6	13	14	3	2
Site B	9	12	13	11	5	4

10. I write different types of stories.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	9	13	10	7	3	2
Site B	15	17	7	7	5	2

11. I like when my teacher assigns a writing topic.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	5	7	8	8	9	7
Site B	6	6	10	14	11	7

12. I like when I choose my own writing topic.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	11	14	9	2	2	6
Site B	19	13	7	3	1	11

13. I am able to edit and revise my writing.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	9	9	10	13	3	0
Site B	7	8	14	14	6	5

14. I like when a classmate helps me edit and revise my writing.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	3	3	7	5	12	14
Site B	11	10	11	14	5	3

15. My parents help me edit and revise my writing.

	always		most of the time		hardly ever	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Site A	12	5	10	7	0	10
Site B	5	11	15	12	7	4

All 15 questions had a slight change from the pre- to post-survey. The first change was in question number one, which pertains to whether or not the children enjoyed writing. There was no change at Site A, but at Site B there was a 22 percent increase in the category of always liking to write. This was a positive change that the researchers found.

In question number two, there was a ten percent change at both Sites A and B. Question number two related to how easy the children believed writing could be. The ten percent increase was in the "always" section of the survey. This slight increase of children found it easier to write after they completed the writing program.

There was also a slight increase in numbers three and four, which referred to how writing made the students feel. Site A had a four percent increase in "how writing makes the child feel inside." Eleven percent of the students from Site B had a positive increase on their feelings of writing. Question number four referred to how writing helped the students sort out their feelings. Nineteen percent of the students from Site B had a significant change towards this question. On the other hand, the students from Site A had no change. The researchers found these questions to be important and meaningful to the study.

The interventions appeared to have a positive effect on the importance of writing for some of the students from Sites A and B. At Site A, there was a 32 percent increase, while at Site B there was a 15 percent change. Those students felt that writing was important.

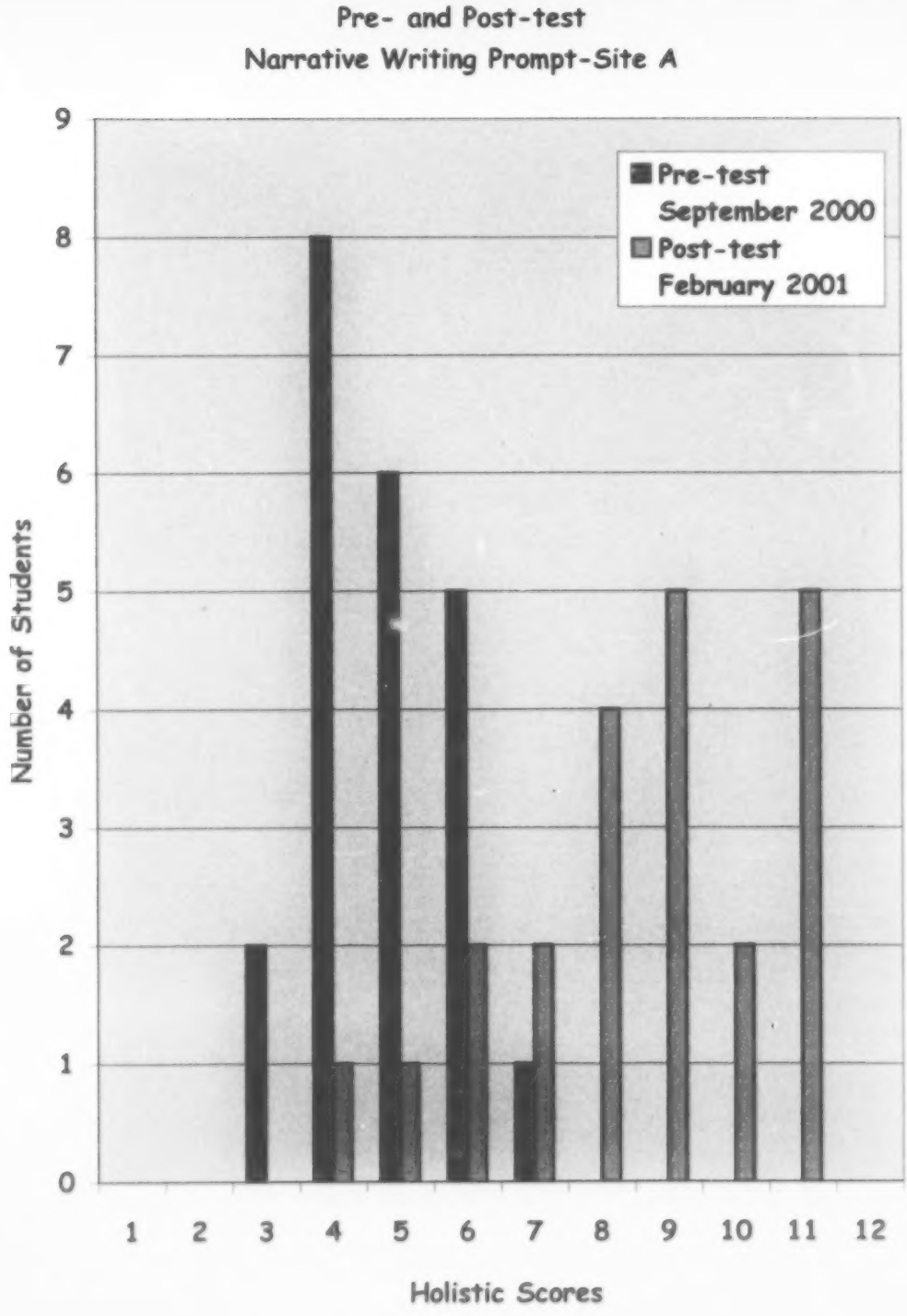
Having pride in pieces of writing was important to this study. Question eight asked the students if they were proud of what they wrote. Nine percent of students from Site A had an increase in the pride of their writing. At Site B, 15 percent of the students had a positive change in the their pride. Pride was an important piece of a writer's self-esteem. That was why this was such a relevant question to the study.

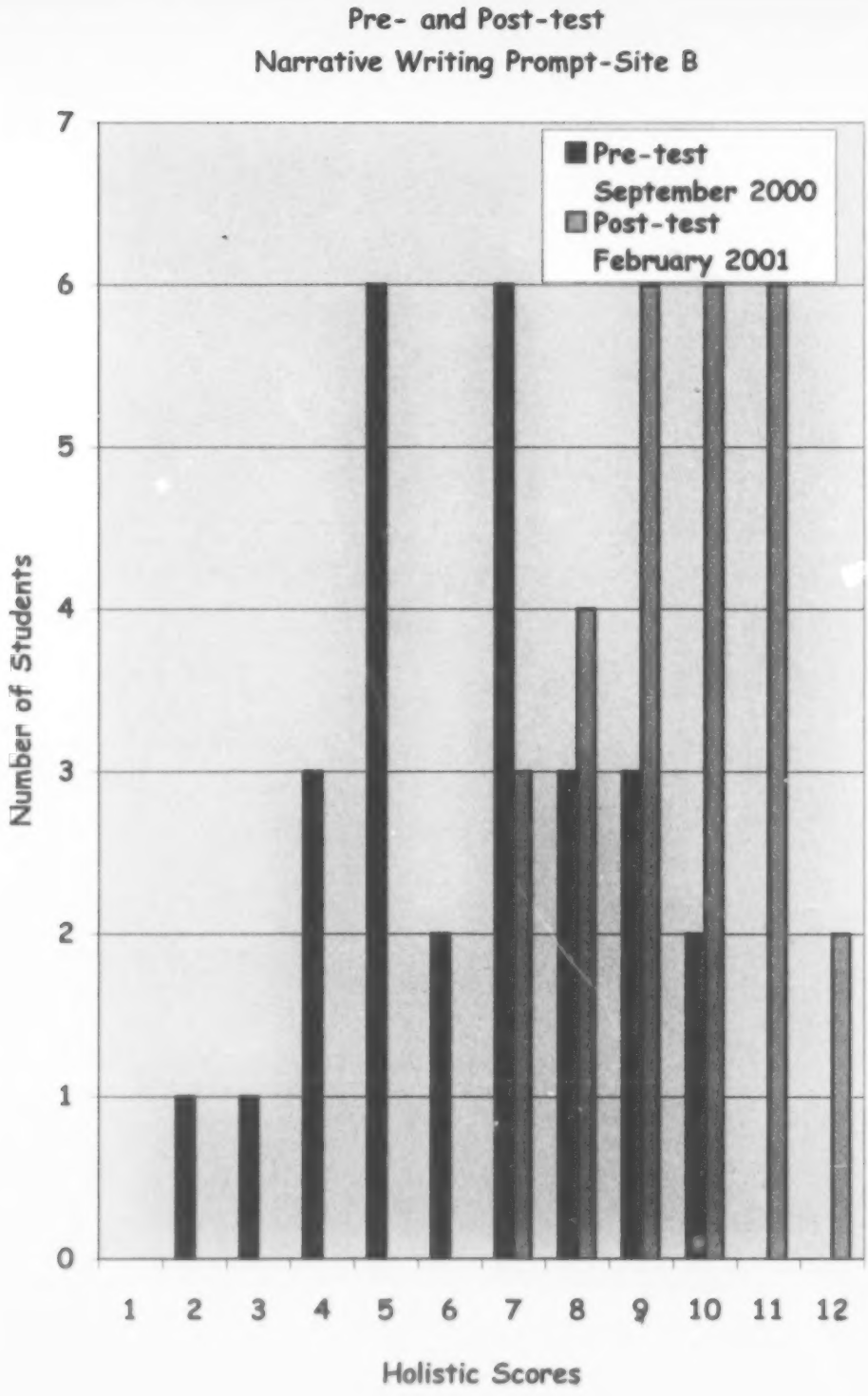
Variety in writing was a specific focus in the writing program and school curriculum. In question number ten, the students were asked if they wrote different types of stories. There was an 18 percent increase at Site A, while there was a seven percent increase at Site B. The students found the variety of writing to be important. Due to the wide range of writing to which the students were exposed throughout the

day, it kept writing fresh and new.

Those were the significant changes that occurred from September's student writing pre-survey to February's student writing post-survey. Decreases were not prevalent in this survey. There was a small change or no change that took place during the interventions of this program.

To determine if there were any improvements over the course of this study in students' writing ability levels, a pre-test and post-test narrative writing prompt was administered to all the students from Site A and B. All of the children were given 35 minutes to write about the following prompt: Describe a time in your life when you felt scared. The results of the pre- and post-test narrative writing are displayed in Tables 9.A. and B..


Pre- and Post-test
Narrative Writing Prompt-Site A
Pre-test September 2000
Post-test February 2001
Number of Students
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Holistic Scores


Pre- and Post-test
Narrative Writing Prompt-Site B
Pre-test September 2000
Post-test February 2001
Number of Students
0
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Holistic Scores

Once the post-tests were completed, the researchers evaluated the pieces of writing by using the state's method of holistic scoring. The same two evaluators who scored the pre-test at each site also scored the post-test. Each evaluator gave the students a one, two, three, four, five, or six on their writing. One, two, and three did not meet state expectations, while four, five, and six did meet state expectations. These two scores were added together for a combined total score. The highest score possible was a 12, while, the lowest was a two.

Using the state standards, the evaluators kept these five writing components in mind while scoring the students' essays: Focus was the first component. The entire paper was focused on the subject of the writing prompt, and provided a clear main idea or point of view. The second was support/elaboration. Support was the degree to which the main point or position was supported and explained by specific details and reasons. Organization was the third component. This was the clarity of the logical flow of ideas and the explicitness of the text structure or plan. The fourth writing component entailed the proper use of conventions. This included proper grammatical conventions including spelling, punctuation, and capitalization appropriate for each grade level. Integration was the final writing component considered while holistically scoring. This was when the student's paper exhibited unity in presentation of ideas.

The researchers found that the average score from September to February had a significant change. In September, the average score was a 4.8 combined total score, while in February it changed to an 8.5 combined total score. Sixteen of the 22 students met state expectations. This was a substantial change since none of the students met expectations on the September pre-test.

Similar to Site A, Site B had a considerable increase in total combined scores for the narrative writing post-test. In September, the average score on the narrative writing pre-test was 5.9, while in February the collaborative total score was 9.5. Only

eight students out of 27 did meet expectations on the pre-writing test. In contrast, twenty-four out of the 27 students met state expectations on the post-test. This was a massive increase that occurred during this writing program.

During the post-test writing prompt the researchers observed certain skills while each student was writing. Graphic organizers were the first item that the researchers were observing. The use of graphic organizers is an important tool in the beginning stages of the writing process. Eleven students out of 22 used a graphic organizer from Site A. All of the students from Site B used a graphic organizer prior to writing their piece. The second component of the observation checklist was if the students began writing immediately after the prompts was presented. At Site A, 20 out of the 22 students started their piece immediately, while 24 out of 27 of the students from Site B did the same. Capitalization and punctuation usage were the next items on the observation checklist. Nineteen out of the 22 students, from Site A, used these grammar techniques appropriately. Twenty-five out of 27 of the students from Site B did equally well. Understanding when to use paragraphs appropriately was the last observation of the checklist. Seventeen of the students from Site A understood paragraphing , and all the students from Site B used paragraphs in their writing pieces.

Throughout the school year, the students at Sites A and B were paired up with one another to create a pen pal network. The researchers tested the effectiveness of this program by evaluating the reflections given by the students. This was measured immediately after receiving a letter from their pal. In their writing journals, the children simply drew a thumbs-up sign, a sideways-thumb, or a thumbs-down sign indicating how they felt about their experience. These were measured in the months of October, December, February, and after the pen pal celebration. The results are listed on the table that follows.

Table 10.A.

Student Responses of Pen Pal Network During the Months of October, December, February, and After the Celebration

October			
	Thumbs-up	Sideways	Thumbs-down
Site A	21	1	0
Site B	26	1	0
December			
	Thumbs-up	Sideways	Thumbs-down
Site A	18	4	0
Site B	25	2	0
February			
	Thumbs-up	Sideways	Thumbs-down
Site A	20	2	0
Site B	24	3	0
After Pen Pal Celebration			
	Thumbs-up	Sideways	Thumbs-down
Site A	20	2	0
Site B	27	0	0

Building a year-long pen pal relationship was a beneficial asset to this writing study. It seemed to have a positive effect on most of the students. The majority of the students from both sites had a thumbs-up attitude towards this networking system.

Only a few students from both sites had a sideways-thumb sign, indicating that their experiences were neither positive or negative. The reason that children felt this way was that their pen pal was sick and was unable to send a letter at that given time.

This concluded the analyses for the results of this study. The assessment tools included: the parent survey, student survey, post-test narrative writing prompt, observation checklist, and pen pal reflection. The results from the tools above had a positive effect on the students and this writing program.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data from the post-test narrative writing prompt, post-observation teacher checklist, pen pal program, post-parent survey, and post-student survey, the majority of the targeted students showed an improvement in their overall confidence in writing and skills. The writing strategies learned in the classroom, along with parent assistance, appeared to have made an impact on the students' writing achievement.

At Sites A and B there was substantial growth in the students' post-narrative writing test scores. In September, when the pre-test was given, none of the students, at Site A, met state expectations. After many interventions, a post-test was administered in February. The results of the post-test indicated 73 percent of the students met state expectations. Similar to Site A, Site B had significant gains on the post-test. Thirty percent of the students from Site B met state expectations in September. Eighty-nine percent of the students met state expectations on the post-test in February. These students made tremendous gains throughout the writing program.

The students from Sites A and B had various expectations, due to the different grade levels. The differences in gains were caused by length of exposure and development in the writing process. The third graders from Site A were not exposed to the various types of writing, or had the opportunity to develop the same skills as the fifth grade students from Site B. Therefore, Site B's percentages started higher and ended higher than Site A. The researchers would expect the students from Site A to have similar gains at Site B when they would be at that same grade level.

While the students were taking their post-test writing prompt, the researchers were observing the skills that each student gained while participating in the writing program. Beginning the writing process with a graphic organizer helped students collect their thoughts and ideas prior to writing. In September, 18 percent of the students from Site A began the writing process with a graphic organizer. During the month of February, 50 percent used a graphic organizer prior to starting their piece of writing. Site B had a large population of students that learned the appropriate use of graphic organizers. During the month of September, seven percent of the students used a graphic organizer. In February, all the students used a type of graphic organizer before writing their essays.

Another significant change was the understanding of paragraphing. At Site A, the students had significant gains with paragraphing skills. In September, none of the students used paragraphs in their writing. During the month of February's post-test writing prompt, 77 percent of those same students used paragraphs appropriately. The students from Site B made gains as well. In September, 44 percent of the students understood paragraphing and in February all of the students used paragraphs properly.

The pen pal writing program was quite an adventure for all the students from Sites A and B. This program entailed writing letters to pen pals monthly, which the students seemed to enjoy. The researchers evaluated this enjoyment by analyzing the student reflections regarding their feelings upon receiving letters from their pen pals. None of the students had a negative experience. In fact, 91 percent of the students from both sites had a positive thumbs-up experience. For a culminating activity, the students shared a celebration at Site B. The students enthusiastically shared their portfolios with one another and participating in various getting-to-know-you activities. Ninety-six percent of the students said their involvement was a positive thumbs-up

experience. From the perspective of the researchers, the pen pal program proved to be a worthwhile writing experience for all the children.

The post-parent survey gave insight to how the parents viewed their children's writing progress throughout the year. Parents were asked what type of change they had seen in their children's motivation to write. Seventy-three percent of the parents from Site A said they felt there was a positive change in their children's motivation towards writing. Forty-eight percent of the parents from Site B had similar feelings. The parents were also asked if they felt their children's writing had improved, stayed the same, or decreased after the writing interventions took place. Eighty-six percent of the parents from Site A responded that they felt their children's writing had improved. Sixty-three percent of the parents from Site B also witnessed improvement throughout the program. After reading the parent comments, the researchers felt there were significant positive gains to the writing program.

Similar to the parents, the students completed a writing survey that let the researchers know how they felt about writing before and after all the interventions. There was a four percent increase at Site A when the students were asked if they enjoyed writing. There was a 22 percent increase at Site B. At Sites A and B, there was a four percent increase in how the writing made the students feel inside. All of these changes were slight, but were a positive increase nonetheless.

Parent involvement was a significant asset to this writing program. During parent/teacher conferences, in October, the parents were given a writing handbook. This handbook helped them guide their children through the various types of writing and its processes. The other parent component was the writing portfolio reflection. After the students collected several pieces of writing, they shared their portfolios with their parents. Parents completed a PQP (Praise, Question, Polish) after reading through the various writing pieces. Overall, the parent comments were positive and

they gave constructive criticism to assist their children with the writing process. This was a positive experience for both parties. The students were excited to share their work, and the parents enjoyed their involvement.

After reviewing the course of action taken throughout the study, the researchers developed the following recommendations: pen pal e-mail, pre-party to meet pen pals, reflection sheet for portfolio, portfolio night or author's tea, more work published, and teacher consistency. The researchers felt that these recommendations would be beneficial if added to the study.

In addition to the handwritten pen pal letters, writing via Internet would give the students an immediate response instead of waiting a week to receive a letter. Setting up individual e-mail accounts could be done through the district. To make this adventure more complete, the students could have a pre-party meeting where they could share a few pieces of writing and get to know one another. Students could witness one another's growth in writing and would help in matching a face with the writing they would receive throughout the year.

A few components could be added to the portfolio to make it more complete. After each student chooses a writing piece for their portfolio, each student could write a reflection on what they learned and why they chose this piece. The last piece would be a portfolio night or author's tea. This would give each student the opportunity to share their work with their family and friends. The researchers feel that this will motivate the students to become better writers and be an overall positive experience.

Along those same lines, the students would gain self-confidence by getting more pieces of writing published. Various children's magazines and local newspapers offer opportunities throughout the school year to publish students' writing. The researchers feel that this could also benefit each child's self-confidence in writing. It also helps the students' understand the full process of writing.

Finally, a key component the researchers felt needed more time and emphasis was teacher consistency throughout the grade levels. A common vocabulary must be established in order for the students to spiral from one grade level to the next. Another key piece would be a curriculum mapping plan that each grade level would develop and then follow. Each grade level would be responsible for teaching a part of the writing process or a type of writing. Teachers can then collaborate ideas for student-friendly rubrics and graphic organizers that would be appropriate for each grade level. This would keep the writing curriculum consistent from year to year and would allow students to feel successful and motivated to become the best writer possible.

REFERENCES CITED

Addams, H.L. (1981, May). Should the big 8 teach communication skills? Management Accounting, 37-40.

Atwell, N. (1987). In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents. Upper Montclair: Boynton/Cook.

Avery, C. (1993). ...And with a light touch. Portmouth: Heinemann.

Bennett, J.C., & Olney, R.J. (1996). Executive priorities for effective communication in an information society. Journal of Business Communication, 23 (2),13-22.

Bottomley, D.M., Henk, W.A., & Melnick, S.A. (1997-1998). Assessing children's views about themselves as writers using the Writer Self-Perception Scale. The Reading Teacher, 51, 286-296.

Capacchione, L. (1989). The creative journal for children. Boston: Shambhala.

Caulkins, L.M. (1986). The art of teaching writing. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Cooper (1993). Writing to know one another. Instructor, 103 (2), 22-23.

Cramer, E. & Castle M. (1994). Fostering the love for reading: The affective domain in reading education. Newark: International Reading Association.

Davis, K.W. (1995). What writing training can and can't do. Training, 32 (8), 60-63.

DeFina, A.A. (1992). Portfolio Assessment: Getting started. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.

Fiderer, A. (1999). 40 rubrics and checklists to assess reading and writing. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.

Frank, M. (1995). If you're trying to teach kids how to write...You've got to have this book. Tennessee: Incentives Publications.

Graves, D.H. (1994). A fresh look at writing. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Graves, D.H. & Stuart V. (1985). Write from the start: Tapping your child's natural writing ability. New York: E.P. Dutton.

Hansen, J. (1996). Evaluation: The center of writing instruction. The Reading Teacher, 50 (3), 188-195.

Hansen J. (1987). When writers read. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Harper, S.C. (1987). Business education: A view from the top. Business Forum, 12, 24-27.

Kear, D.J., Coffman, G.A., McKenna, M.C., & Ambrosio, A.L. (2000). Measuring attitude towards writing: A new tool for teachers. The Reading Teacher, 54 (1), 286-296.

Kellaher, K. (1999, March). Get kids' work published: Top tips on how to do it from children's magazine editors. Scholastic Instructor, 14-16.

Maifair, L.L. (1999, April). Practically painless peer editing: Your students can work together to strengthen writing skills. Scholastic Instructor, 8-10.

Merkley, D.M. & Jefferies, D. (200-2001). Guidelines for implementing a graphic organizer. The Reader Teacher, 54 (4), 350-357.

Pickhardt, C. Ph.D. (2000). Keys to developing your child's self-esteem. Hauppauge: Barron's Educational Series.

Rubin, D. (1995). Teaching elementary language arts. Needham Heights: Simon and Schuster.

Sejnost, R. & Thiese S. (2001). Reading and writing across the content areas. SkyLight Professional Development, Arlington Heights.

Simpson, C. (1993). Daily journals. Glenview: Good Year Books.

State School Report Card (1999). Local Site A.

State School Report Card (1999). Local Site B.

Tully, M. (1996). Helping students revise their writing. New York: Scholastic Professional Books.

Turner, J. & Paris, S. (1995). How literacy tasks influence children's motivation for literacy. The Reading Teacher, 48, 662-673.

Village of Local Site, Area Chamber of Commerce

Wolfe, P. (1999, November). What teachers need to know about brain research. Paper presented at the Illinois Administrators Academy, CITY, Illinois.

Zaragoza, N. & Vaughn S. (1995). Children teach us writing. The Reading Teacher, 49 (1), 42-47.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Previous Teacher Letter

August 29, 2000

Dear Teachers,

We are currently participating in Saint Xavier University Field-Based Master's Degree Program in Teaching and Leadership. As part of the program, we are completing a research project on effective strategies to improve and motivate confidence in writing in the intermediate grades. This study hopes to increase parent involvement with their child's writing, students' internal confidence, and add various teacher interventions to our curriculum. These strategies combined will improve students' overall writing achievement.

As you can see, writing is going to be a strong concentration throughout our curriculum this year. This study will be conducted during the months of September through February. The students will engage in various writing activities that will promote positive learning throughout the year. This study promises to provide students with an exciting opportunity that they will benefit from greatly.

In order for our study to be successful, we need your help and support. We are asking for you to complete a writing survey on some of the students you had in your classroom last year that we have in our classroom this school year. Also, at your convenience, we would like to conduct a short interview with you regarding your overall feelings about writing. We greatly appreciate your time and efforts in making our project a huge success. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Eleni Koulourianos
Vickie Marienau

APPENDIX B
Previous Teacher Writing Survey

PREVIOUS TEACHER WRITING SURVEY

Student Name	Exhibits Confidence (Yes or No)	Strengths	Weaknesses	Comments

APPENDIX C
Previous Teacher Interview

Teacher's Name:_____ Date:_____

Previous Teacher Interview

1. How important is writing in your classroom?
   very important somewhat important not important

2. What subjects do you incorporate writing in daily?
   L.A. Math Science Social Studies

3. Do you feel you are trained to teach the three types of writing?
   yes somewhat no

4. What types of writing do you teach in your classroom?
   narrative persuasive expository

5. What components of the writing process do you focus on most often?
   brainstorming prewriting 1st draft
   editing/revisions publishing

6. What is the overall attitude on writing in your classroom?
   enthusiastic in between negative

7. Do you feel that your students need more motivation to write?
   yes somewhat no

8. Which of the following writing interventions do you use in your classroom?
   pen pals peer conferencing/editing
   teacher conferencing graphic organizers

APPENDIX D
Parent Writing Survey

Parent's Name:_____ Date:_____
Student's Name:_____

Parent Writing Survey

For each item circle your response:

1. Does your child write at home?
   almost always sometimes almost never

2. Do you encourage your child to write at home?
   almost always sometimes almost never

3. Does your child enjoy writing letters, stories, poems, etc.?
   almost always sometimes almost never

4. Do you talk about your child's writing with him/her?
   almost always sometimes almost never

5. Do you write at home?
   almost always sometimes almost never

6. Does your child see you writing at home?
   almost always sometimes almost never

7. Do you provide writing materials for your child?
   almost always sometimes almost never

8. Are you available to assist your child with rewriting if necessary?
   almost always sometimes almost never

APPENDIX E
Student Writing Survey

Student's Name:_____ Date:_____

Student Writing Survey

1. I like to write.
   always most of the time hardly ever

2. I find it easy to write.
   always most of the time hardly ever

3. I like how writing makes me feel inside.
   always most of the time hardly ever

4. I think that writing is important.
   always most of the time hardly ever

5. I like to write at school.
   always most of the time hardly ever

6. I like to write at home.
   always most of the time hardly ever

7. I am proud of what I write.
   always most of the time hardly ever

8. I am good at putting ideas on paper.
   always most of the time hardly ever

9. I write different types of stories.
   always most of the time hardly ever

10. I like when my teacher assigns a writing topic.
    always most of the time hardly ever

11. I like when I choose my own writing topic.
    always most of the time hardly ever

12. I am able to revise and edit my writing.
    always most of the time hardly ever

13. I like when a classmate helps me revise and edit my writing.
    always most of the time hardly ever

APPENDIX F
Pre-test Narrative Prompt

W.O.W. DAY

Narrative Prompt

Pretest September 2000

Write about one exciting time you experienced this past summer. Your experience may include vacations, weddings, family parties, sport camps, friends sleeping over, or any other event you took part in. Describe what you did. Use adjectives and add details. Be sure to SHOW your feelings throughout your story.

You may use this paper for any pre-writing activities. Try your best!

APPENDIX G
Teacher Writing Observation Checklist

Teacher Writing Checklist

Student Name:	Yes	No
1. Did the student begin the writing process by using a graphic organizer?		
2. Did the student begin writing immediately after the prompt was presented?		
3. Did the student use capitalization?		
4. Did the student use punctuation?		
5. Did the student understand paragraphing?		

Student Name:	Yes	No
1. Did the student begin the writing process by using a graphic organizer?		
2. Did the student begin writing immediately after the prompt was presented?		
3. Did the student use capitalization?		
4. Did the student use punctuation?		
5. Did the student understand paragraphing?		

Student Name:	Yes	No
1. Did the student begin the writing process by using a graphic organizer?		
2. Did the student begin writing immediately after the prompt was presented?		
3. Did the student use capitalization?		
4. Did the student use punctuation?		
5. Did the student understand paragraphing?		

APPENDIX H

Praise, Question, Polish Reflection Sheet

Partner's Name:_____ Date:_____

Title of Piece:_____ My Name:_____

PQP

Praise:_____

_____

_____

_____

Question:_____

_____

_____

_____

Polish:_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX I
Praise, Question, Suggest Reflection Sheet

REVISION

AUTHOR _____

REVISER _____

PRAISE

Tell the writer what you like about his/her writing. Did you like his/her style of writing, description of characters, or certain part of the piece? (EX: I like the way you used similes in your descriptions.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

QUESTION

What don't you understand in the writing? Does the story follow a logical sequence? Where has the writer confused you or has not answered any question in your mind? (EX: I don't understand when .....)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SUGGEST

Give the author some constructive, helpful suggestions.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

My Writing Planner

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Date:					
Writing Piece:					
My Goals and Plans:					
Comments: Teacher, Student, or Parent					

Name:_____

APPENDIX K
Narrative Rubric

Narrative Rubric

Focus-_____/6
*event/theme is clear and maintained
*has a strong ending
*use feeling by adding figurative language:similes, metaphors, and personification
(I was so scared that my hair stood straight up.)

Elaboration-_____/6
*give specific details for each episode/reactions
*use "WOW" words

Organization-_____/6
*has a plan - beginning, middle, end
*these events are in time order
*use transition words
-vertical transitions (between paragraphs)
-horizontal transitions (glue within paragraphs)
* use sentence variety

Conventions-_____/6
*mastery of sentence construction
*few spelling errors (100 most frequent words)
*mastery of punctuation/capitalization
*mastery of verb/noun agreement

Integration-_____/6
*Is the paper clear?
*Was the prompt followed?
*Does it have balanced support?
*Does this paper truly resemble your writing abilities?

Total_____/30

APPENDIX L
Persuasive/Expository Rubric

Persuasive/Expository Rubric

Focus-_____/6

- restate prompt/thesis/main idea in introduction or opening
- give specific reasons
- stick to the prompt/thesis/main idea
- your paper has a clear purpose
- paper is in a logical order
- restate prompt and reasoning in a new and effective conclusion

Support-_____/6

- give specific details for each reason
- use "WOW" words

Orga nization-_____/6

- Do you have a plan?
- use paragraphs-indent
- 3-5 sentences in each paragraph
- use transition words
    - * vertical transitions-between paragraphs
    - * horizontal transitions-glue within paragraphs
- use sentence variety

Conventions-_____/6

- mastery of sentence construction
- correct spelling
- mastery of punctuation/capitalization
- mastery of verb/noun agreement

Integration-_____/6

- Is your paper clear?
- Did you follow the assignment?
- Does it have balanced support?
- Does this paper truly resemble your writing abilities?

Total _____/30

APPENDIX M
Parent Permission Slip

August 29, 2000

Dear Parents,

As our school year begins, we are looking forward to an exciting year of learning, experiencing, and exploring. Among other focuses, writing is going to be a strong concentration throughout our curriculum this year.

We are currently participating in Saint Xavier University Field-Based Master's Degree Program in Teaching and Leadership. As part of the program, we are completing a research project on effective strategies to improve and motivate confidence in writing in the intermediate grades. This study hopes to increase parent involvement with their child's writing, students' internal confidence, and add various teacher interventions to our curriculum. These strategies combined will improve students' overall writing achievement.

In order for your child to be actively involved in this study, a signed permission form is necessary. This study will be conducted during the months of September through February. There will be both parent and student surveys completed to analyze confidence and attitudes towards written language. Your child will engage in various writing activities that will promote positive learning throughout the year. Each child will keep an individual writing portfolio which will show growth throughout the year. Miss Koulourianos' fifth grade class from Countryside and Mrs. Marienau's third class from Lines will be participating in an all year pen pal writing adventure.

This study promises to provide students with an exciting opportunity that they will benefit from greatly. Hopefully, they will be able to take these strategies and utilize them throughout their life. Throughout this study specific names will not be used in reporting survey and test data results.

Students, parents, and teachers can work together to make this experience a success. Please feel free to contact us with any questions, comments, or concerns about our writing program. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Miss Eleni Koulourianos
Mrs. Vickie Marienau

PLEASE RETURN TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER BY FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1.

I give permission for my child, _____, to participate in this writing study.

_____ _____

Parent Signature Date

APPENDIX N
Parent Letter Requesting Binder

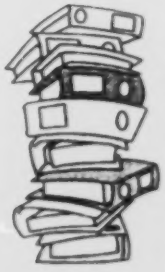
August 29, 2000

Dear Parents,

As part of our writing program this year, your child will create a writing portfolio. He/she will select various writing pieces to put in their portfolio throughout the year.

You will need to purchase a 1-inch, 3-ring binder with a clear view cover. Your child may choose the color. Please send your binder in by Friday, September 1st.

Thank you for your help and support.



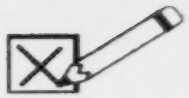
Sincerely,

Miss Koulourianos
Mrs. Marienau

APPENDIX 0
Proofreading/Editing Marks

Look!

Editing Marks:	Examples:
Add a word or words	^
Omit a word or words	⌀
Add a period	⊙
Add a comma	^,
Start a new paragraph	¶
Correct the spelling	sp. ⬭
Make a capital letter	≡



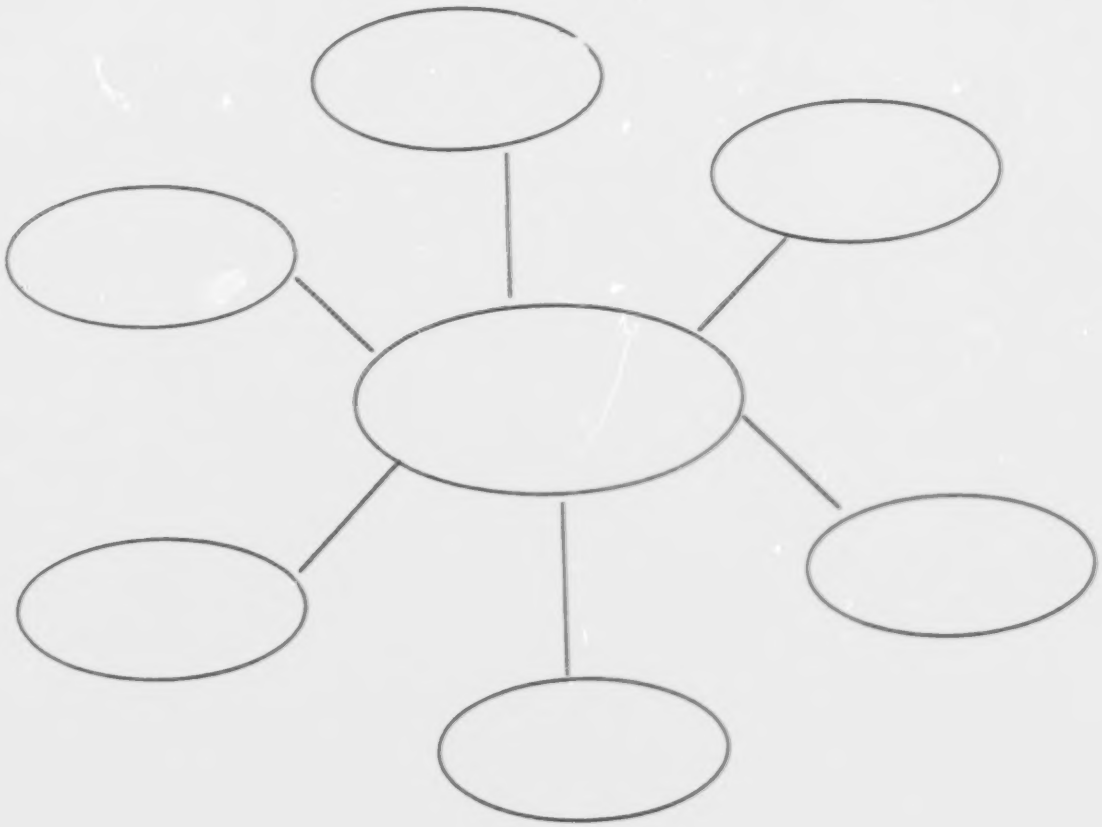
WRITING CHECKLIST

Title of Story	Brainstorming	1st Draft	Revise	Edit	Publish

APPENDIX Q
Writing Web/Graphic Organizer

Getting Started:

Use the figure or web below to organize your ideas. Place the subject of you essay in the center circle. List supporting ideas in the circles around it.



APPENDIX R
Writing Checklist-3rd Grade

Writing Checklist

Name _____ Date _____

Title _____

A Writing Checklist

(Grade 3)

1. I read my writing to myself to see if it made sense. ☐

2. I used specific words to make my writing clearer. ☐

   Examples:

   sprinted ^ ~~ran~~ **whispered** ^ ~~said~~ **Hershey bar** ^ ~~candy~~ **cheese sandwich** ^ ~~lunch~~

3. I read my story again to see where to stop for ☐

   periods . **question marks ?** **exclamation points !**

4. I crossed out extra words (*and, then*) that I didn't need. ☐

5. I used capital letters: ☐

   at the beginning of each sentence ☐

   for the first letter of each name ☐

   for the word *I* ☐

6. I looked for words that might be misspelled and tried to correct them. ☐

APPENDIX S
Editing Checklist-Upper Elementary

Self-Assessment Checklist

Name _____ Date _____

Editing Checklist

(Upper Elementary)

Read your writing to see if you should answer **Yes** or **No** to each question. If your answer to a question is No, make the appropriate correction.

	Yes	No
1. Did I use complete sentences (no fragments)?	☐	☐
2. Does each sentence begin with a capital letter and end with a period, question mark, or exclamation point?	☐	☐
3. Did I check to see that I have no run-on sentences?	☐	☐
4. Are my sentences logically organized into paragraphs?	☐	☐
5. Did I check my spelling and make corrections?	☐	☐
6. Did I capitalize the names of people, places, and titles?	☐	☐
7. Did I use quotation marks around spoken words?	☐	☐
8. Did I use commas correctly?	☐	☐
9. Did I use apostrophes for contractions?	☐	☐
10. Did I use apostrophes to show possession?	☐	☐

APPENDIX T
Writing Conference Teacher Notes

Writing Conferences

NAME:_____

Date	Story	Conference Notes

APPENDIX U
Bio Poem

BIO POEM

1. 1st name only
2. 4 adjectives that describe you
3. Sibling of
4. Lover of (3 things)
5. Who feels (3 things)
6. Who fears (3 things)
7. Who'd like to see (3 things)
8. Resident of (city and state)
9. Last name

EXAMPLE:

Mrs.
Loving, Caring, Organized, and Responsible
Sibling of Tony
Lover of chocolate, Matt, friends and family
Who feels sad, anxious, and excited
Who fears bugs, bees, and failure
Who'd like to see Italy, world peace, and a successful year
Resident of Rolling Meadows, Illinois
Marienau

Personal Narrative

APPENDIX V

Personal Narrative Graphic Organizer

OPENING ACT

CHOOSE ONE: Dialogue, Action, Question, Sound Effects, or Thoughts/Feelings

SETTING:

MAIN EVENT

Choose only ONE EVENT!

ENDING

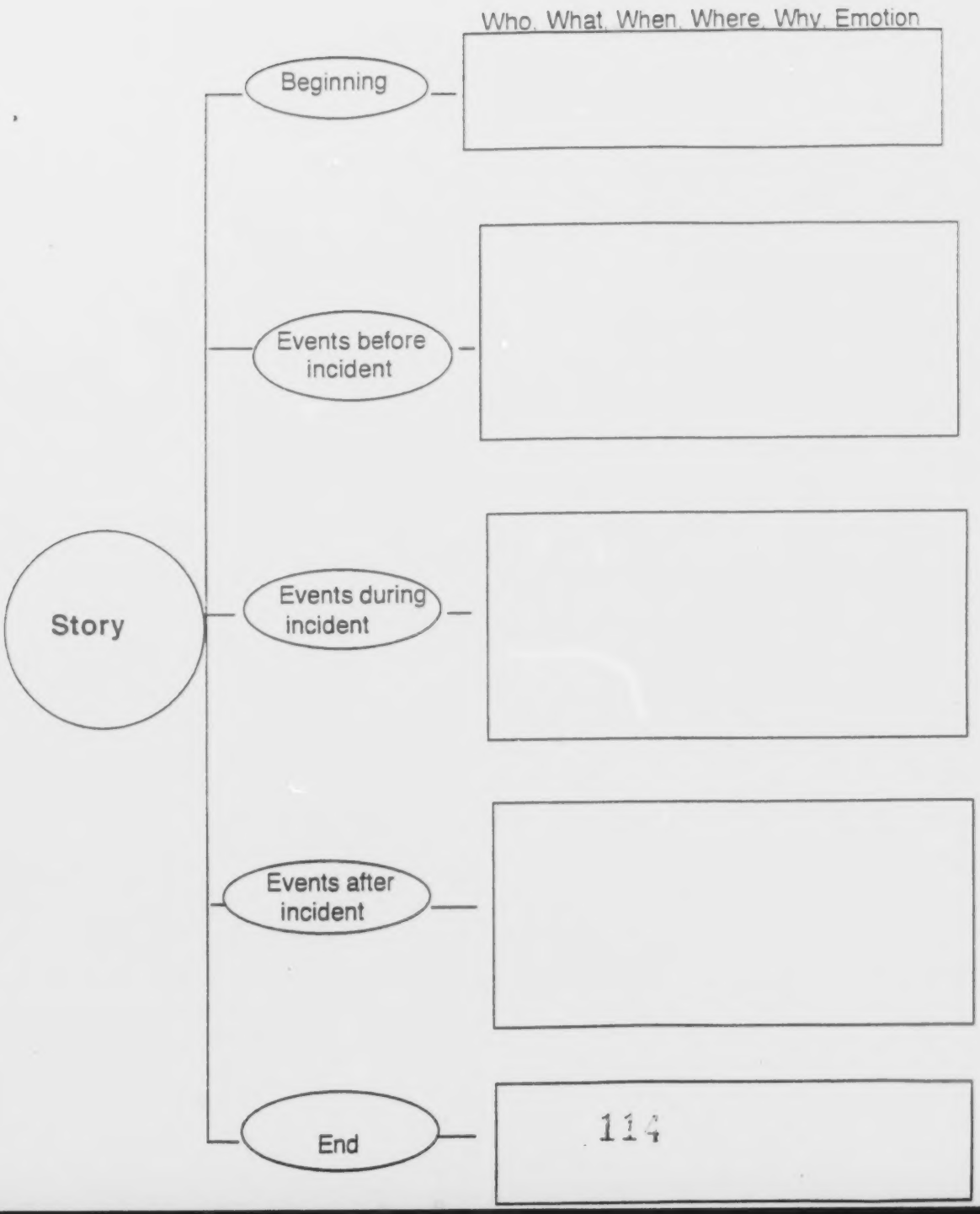
Memories, Feelings, Hopes/Wishes, Decisions

FEELINGS

Show-Don't Tell!

APPENDIX W
Narrative Writing Planning Sheet

Narrative (Story) Writing Planning Sheet



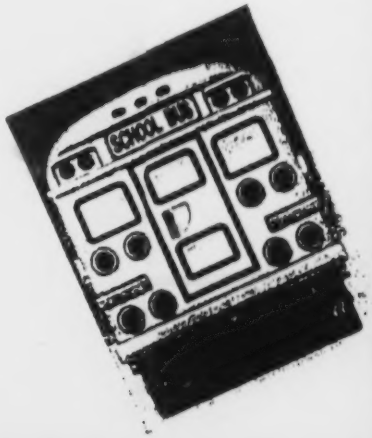
APPENDIX X
Parent Handbook Cover Page

Parent Handbook to Aid in the Success of Your Child's Writing Process!

" One responsibility of parents is to establish healthy goals, standards, and limits for their child, and this includes setting appropriate expectations for school achievement."

By: Carl Pickardt, Ph.D.
Author of:
Keys to Developing Your Child's Self-Esteem

Taking the time to support your child in their educational experiences will benefit their learning process. Your encouragement and help can ensure success in your child's future. Thank you for assisting your child in the adventures of writing.



APPENDIX Y
Tips for a Confident Writer

Tips to Help Your Child Become a Better and More Confident Writer!

Evidence has proven that when parents play an active role in their child's education the child will make tremendous gains. Parents must be a good role model for their child. Parents who read and write around their children demonstrate enjoyment and the process that is taken when reading and writing. Reading and writing must be part of their daily lives and should be a special and entertaining part of playtime with children (Graves and Stuart 1985).

What to do when your child brings home writing pieces from school.

- show interest by responding to your child's writing positively
- keep questions positive (for example say: "This sentence confused me." instead of: "This sentence is a mess, I can't make this out.")
- pick one problem in your child's writing piece and focus on that (examples: content, organization/paragraphing, final touches can include grammar)
- main focus should not include grammar issues. Ideas and thoughts are more important in the writing process. Keep it for the very end of your time together.

List of everyday activities to help your child improve their writing.

- writing a letter (friend or family)
- help with cooking (writing or reading a recipe)
- writing grocery shopping (making a list or reading a list)
- keeping a daily planner/calendar (at home)
- writing journals/diaries
- writing thank you notes (for gifts)
- making lists (birthday/holiday gifts, things to do)

APPENDIX Z
The Three Types of Writing

The 3 Types of Writing

PERSONAL NARRATIVE WRITING

The students will share and reflect upon a significant experience they have had and record their reactions. The students are expected to describe the action and express their feelings.

PERSUASIVE WRITING

This type of writing assignment requires students to take a position and develop one side of an argument. A persuasive paper tells the writers feelings, lists reasons, and asks the reader to agree with them.

EXPOSITORY WRITING

Expository writing requires students to interpret, or describe something based upon background experiences or information provided in the prompt.

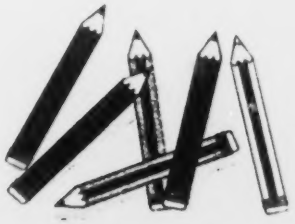
APPENDIX AA
A Guide to Personal Narratives: 3rd Grade

Personal Narrative Writing

OPENING ACT

- Grab the reader's attention and get them interested!
  - Use dialogue, action, question, sound effects, or thoughts/feelings
- Tell the reader where you are and what the main character's goal is.
- Begin your story as close to the main event as possible.
- If the opening act is too long the audience gets restless.

MAIN EVENT



- Choose ONE event to focus on
- Action
- Dialogue
- Description
- The main character's thoughts/feelings
  - Show-Don't Tell
- REMEMBER-No bed to bed stories!

ENDING

- A memory of the main event
- The main character's feelings
- The main character's hopes/wishes
- A decision or defining action

APPENDIX BB
Student Friendly Rubric: Narrative

KID FRIENDLY RUBRIC

Narrative

Focus –

- use reactions = show don't tell
  I was scared → My hair stood on end.
- has one inch picture frame
- make subject clear – unifying event
- stick to the experience throughout – the WHAT of the story
- don't ramble

Elaboration –

- give specific details for each episode
- use exciting words

Organization –

- has a plan – beginning, middle, end
- use paragraphs – indent, more than one sentence
- use transitions
  - vertical transitions – between paragraphs
  - horizontal transitions – glue within paragraphs
- use sentence variety – more than simple sentences

APPENDIX CC
Student Friendly Rubric: Persuasive/Expository

KID FRIENDLY RUBRIC

Persuasive/Expository

Focus –

- restate prompt/thesis/main idea in introduction or opening
- give specific reasons
- stick to the prompt/thesis/main idea
- restate prompt and reasoning in a new way in conclusion

Elaboration –

- give specific details for each reason
- use exciting words

Organization –

- has a plan
- use paragraphs – indent, more than one sentence
- use transitions
    - * vertical transitions – between paragraphs
    - * horizontal transitions – glue within paragraphs
- use sentence variety – more than simple sentences

APPENDIX DD

"Musties": Words that I Must Spell Correctly

"Musties": Words that I Must Spell Correctly

a
about
after
all
an
and
are
as
at
be
been
but
by
called
can
could
do
did
down
each
find
first
for
from

had
has
have
he
her
him
his
how
I
if
in
into
is
it
its
just
know
like
little
long
made
make
many
may
more

most
my
no
not
now
of
on
one
only
or
other
out
over
people
said
see
she
so
some
than
that
the
their
them
then

there
these
they
this
time
to
two
up
use
very
was
water
way
we
were
what
when
where
which
who
will
with
words
would
you
your

APPENDIX EE
A Guide to Narrative Writing

Write to Narrate

Part 2

The goal of **narrative** writing is to tell stories. Narrative writing works best when it presents and develops a story in an organized manner. Narrative writing should carry readers along and make them want to know what will happen next.

Narrative writing techniques focus on the effective use of basic story elements—a setting in time and place, central characters, a plot, a conflict, and a resolution. Narrative writing needs a beginning, a middle, and an end, and many vivid details that bring the tale to life.

Evaluation Tips

There are many ways to evaluate students' narrative writing. Here are some broad points to consider as you judge some or all of the writing activities in this section of the book:

Does the narrative piece have—

- ❑ A clear beginning, middle, and end?
- ❑ A way to engage readers from the start?
- ❑ Specific characters, setting, and plot?
- ❑ Vivid details?
- ❑ Realistic dialogue (if applicable)?
- ❑ A consistent point of view?
- ❑ Transitions and indications of order?

- ❑ Is the piece complete?
- ❑ Does it allow readers to follow a story?
- ❑ Does it reach its intended audience?
- ❑ Does it show planning and follow-through?
- ❑ Is the word choice thoughtful, precise, and descriptive?
- ❑ How are the mechanics (grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation)?

APPENDIX FF
A Guide to Persuasive Writing

Write to Persuade ..... Part 4

The goal of **persuasive** writing is to offer an opinion supported by facts. Persuasive writing attempts to convince the reader to agree with the author's point of view. Persuasive writing works best when facts and examples back up the author's statements.

Techniques of persuasive writing include the use of comparison and value words, such as *better, more precise,* or *safest.* Persuasive writing must be logical and convincing, but to be most effective it should not hit the reader over the head!

Evaluation Tips

There are many ways to evaluate students' persuasive writing. Here are some broad points to consider as you judge some or all of the writing activities in this section of the book:

Does the persuasive piece have—

- ❑ A clear audience and purpose?
- ❑ A logical plan of organization?
- ❑ A focused argument?
- ❑ Support through examples, logic, data, or other details?
- ❑ A strong conclusion?
- ❑ A reasonable and/or respectful tone?

- ❑ Is the piece complete?
- ❑ Does it allow readers to evaluate the writer's point of view?
- ❑ Does it show planning and follow-through?
- ❑ Is the word choice thoughtful, precise, and persuasive?
- ❑ How are the mechanics (grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation)?

APPENDIX GG
A Guide to Expository Writing

Write to Inform

The goal of **expository** writing is to give information. Expository writing may convey ideas, provide step-by-step directions, or explain how to complete a task. Expository writing must present facts and details in an orderly way; it should be extremely clear and informative.

Techniques of expository writing include the use of transition words such as *first*, *then*, or *finally*, and graphic organizers such as tables, charts, graphs, or diagrams. Expository writing needs well-structured paragraphs with topic sentences supported by details; it should be geared to meet the needs of a specific audience.

Evaluation Tips

There are many ways to evaluate students' expository writing. Here are some broad points to consider as you judge some or all of the writing activities in this section of the book:

Does the expository piece have—

- ❑ A stated purpose or clear focus?
- ❑ A sensible plan of organization?
- ❑ A beginning, middle, and end?
- ❑ Paragraphs with main ideas and supporting details?
- ❑ Effective transitions?
- ❑ Thorough explanations?
- ❑ Precise language?
- ❑ Accurate definitions?

- ❑ Is the piece complete?
- ❑ Does it allow readers to get information clearly?
- ❑ Does it show planning and follow-through?
- ❑ Is the word choice thoughtful, precise, and informative?
- ❑ How are the mechanics (grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation)?

APPENDIX HH
Word Bank of 1200 High-Frequency Writing Words

Reference 1 77

Word Bank of 1200 High-Frequency Writing Words

Researchers over the years have carefully tabulated the highest-utility writing words. There are only minor differences in word placement among the most respected and massive studies, which serves to validate the totality of this research. The ***Spelling Sourcebook*** word bank of 1200 high-use writing words is a cross-referenced compilation of these word-frequency studies. At its base is the American Heritage Word Frequency Study (Carroll, Davies, Richman). However, several other valid studies significantly influenced the development of the word bank. These include the work of Gates, Horn, Rinsland, Greene and Loomer, Harris and Jacobson.

Between frequencies 1-999, all words have been included in the ***Spelling Sourcebook*** word bank, regardless of their phonetic complexity. For frequencies 1000-1200, words have been edited to make the word bank instructionally appropriate at the upper grade levels. Regularly spelled words with few letters have been omitted from the word bank within these frequencies. In their place are the next words that occur consecutively in the frequency studies. This maintains the integrity and consistency of the ***Spelling Sourcebook*** word bank, accurately indicating the relative frequency of use of the words listed. As a result, the word bank provides appropriate spelling words for the lower, as well as the upper grade levels.

This word bank is the source for the Core Words (see Article 2, page 9) and Priority Words (see Article 8, page 33, and Article 9, page 39). The words in the bank are listed in the order of their frequency of use in everyday writing. Words decrease in writing utility as the word numbers increase. Since *the* is the most frequently used word in our language, its number is one (1) in the word bank. Therefore, knowing how to spell *the* should provide a writer with more spelling power than knowing how to spell any other word, save the writer's own name.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

frequency	word
1	the
2	of
3	and
4	a
5	to
6	in
7	is
8	you
9	that
10	it
11	he
12	for
13	was
14	on
15	are
16	as
17	with
18	his
19	they
20	at
21	be
22	this
23	from
24	I
25	have
26	or
27	by
28	one
29	had
30	not
31	but
32	what
33	all
34	were
35	when
36	we
37	there
38	can
39	an
40	your
41	which
42	their
43	said
44	if
45	do
46	will
47	each
48	about

frequency	word
49	how
50	up
51	out
52	them
53	then
54	she
55	many
56	some
57	so
58	these
59	would
60	other
61	into
62	has
63	more
64	her
65	two
66	like
67	him
68	see
69	time
70	could
71	no
72	make
73	than
74	first
75	been
76	its
77	who
78	now
79	people
80	my
81	made
82	over
83	did
84	down
85	only
86	way
87	find
88	use
89	may
90	water
91	long
92	little
93	very
94	after
95	words
96	called

frequency	word
97	just
98	where
99	most
100	know
101	get
102	through
103	back
104	much
105	go
106	good
107	new
108	write
109	our
110	me
111	man
112	too
113	any
114	day
115	same
116	right
117	look
118	think
119	also
120	around
121	another
122	came
123	come
124	work
125	three
126	must
127	because
128	does
129	part
130	even
131	place
132	well
133	such
134	here
135	take
136	why
137	help
138	put
139	different
140	away
141	again
142	off
143	went
144	old

frequency	word
145	number
146	great
147	tell
148	men
149	say
150	small
151	every
152	found
153	still
154	between
155	name
156	should
157	home
158	big
159	give
160	air
161	line
162	set
163	own
164	under
165	read
166	last
167	never
168	us
169	left
170	end
171	along
172	while
173	might
174	next
175	sound
176	below
177	saw
178	something
179	thought
180	both
181	few
182	those
183	always
184	show
185	large
186	often
187	together
188	asked
189	house
190	don't
191	world
192	going

frequency	word
193	want
194	school
195	important
196	until
197	form
198	food
199	keep
200	children
201	feet
202	land
203	side
204	without
205	boy
206	once
207	animal
208	life
209	enough
210	took
211	four
212	head
213	above
214	kind
215	began
216	almost
217	live
218	page
219	got
220	earth
221	need
222	far
223	hand
224	high
225	year
226	mother
227	light
228	country
229	father
230	let
231	night
232	picture
233	being
234	study
235	second
236	soon
237	story
238	since
239	white
240	ever

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

frequency	word
241	paper
242	hard
243	near
244	sentence
245	better
246	best
247	across
248	during
249	today
250	however
251	sure
252	knew
253	it's
254	try
255	told
256	young
257	sun
258	thing
259	whole
260	hear
261	example
262	heard
263	several
264	change
265	answer
266	room
267	sea
268	against
269	top
270	turned
271	learn
272	point
273	city
274	play
275	toward
276	five
277	himself
278	usually
279	money
280	seen
281	didn't
282	car
283	morning
284	I'm
285	body
286	upon
287	family
288	later

frequency	word
289	turn
290	move
291	face
292	door
293	cut
294	done
295	group
296	true
297	half
298	red
299	fish
300	plants
301	living
302	black
303	eat
304	short
305	United States
306	run
307	book
308	gave
309	order
310	open
311	ground
312	cold
313	really
314	table
315	remember
316	tree
317	course
318	front
319	American
320	space
321	inside
322	ago
323	sad
324	early
325	I'll
326	learned
327	brought
328	close
329	nothing
330	though
331	idea
332	before
333	lived
334	became
335	add
336	become

frequency	word
337	grow
338	draw
339	yet
340	less
341	wind
342	behind
343	cannot
344	letter
345	among
346	able
347	dog
348	shown
349	mean
350	English
351	rest
352	perhaps
353	certain
354	six
355	feel
356	fire
357	ready
358	green
359	yes
360	built
361	special
362	ran
363	full
364	town
365	complete
366	oh
367	person
368	hot
369	anything
370	hold
371	state
372	list
373	stood
374	hundred
375	ten
376	fast
377	felt
378	kept
379	notice
380	can't
381	strong
382	voice
383	probably
384	area

frequency	word
385	horse
386	matter
387	stand
388	box
389	start
390	that's
391	class
392	piece
393	surface
394	river
395	common
396	stop
397	am
398	talk
399	whether
400	fine
401	round
402	dark
403	past
404	ball
405	girl
406	road
407	blue
408	instead
409	either
410	held
411	already
412	warm
413	gone
414	finally
415	summer
416	understand
417	moon
418	animals
419	mind
420	outside
421	power
422	problem
423	longer
424	winter
425	deep
426	heavy
427	carefully
428	follow
429	beautiful
430	everyone
431	leave
432	everything

frequency	word
433	game
434	system
435	bring
436	watch
437	shell
438	dry
439	within
440	floor
441	ice
442	ship
443	themselves
444	begin
445	fact
446	third
447	quite
448	carry
449	distance
450	although
451	sat
452	possible
453	heart
454	real
455	simple
456	snow
457	rain
458	suddenly
459	easy
460	leaves
461	lay
462	size
463	wild
464	weather
465	miss
466	pattern
467	sky
468	walked
469	main
470	someone
471	center
472	field
473	stay
474	itself
475	boat
476	question
477	wide
478	least
479	tiny
480	hour

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

frequency	word
481	happened
482	foot
483	care
484	low
485	else
486	gold
487	build
488	glass
489	rock
490	tall
491	alone
492	bottom
493	check
494	reading
495	fall
496	poor
497	map
498	friend
499	language
500	job
501	music
502	buy
503	window
504	mark
505	heat
506	grew
507	listen
508	ask
509	single
510	clear
511	energy
512	week
513	explain
514	lost
515	spring
516	travel
517	wrote
518	farm
519	circle
520	whose
521	correct
522	bed
523	measure
524	straight
525	base
526	mountain
527	caught
528	hair

frequency	word
529	bird
530	wood
531	color
532	war
533	fly
534	yourself
535	seem
536	thus
537	square
538	moment
539	teacher
540	happy
541	bright
542	sent
543	present
544	plan
545	rather
546	length
547	speed
548	machine
549	information
550	except
551	figure
552	you're
553	free
554	fell
555	suppose
556	natural
557	ocean
558	government
559	baby
560	grass
561	plane
562	street
563	couldn't
564	reason
565	difference
566	maybe
567	history
568	mouth
569	middle
570	step
571	child
572	strange
573	wish
574	soil
575	human
576	trip

frequency	word
577	woman
578	eye
579	milk
580	choose
581	north
582	seven
583	famous
584	late
585	pay
586	sleep
587	iron
588	trouble
589	store
590	beside
591	oil
592	modern
593	fun
594	catch
595	business
596	reach
597	lot
598	won't
599	case
600	speak
601	shape
602	eight
603	edge
604	soft
605	village
606	object
607	age
608	minute
609	wall
610	meet
611	record
612	copy
613	forest
614	especially
615	necessary
616	he's
617	unit
618	flat
619	direction
620	south
621	subject
622	skin
623	wasn't
624	I've

frequency	word
625	yellow
626	party
627	force
628	test
629	bad
630	temperature
631	pair
632	ahead
633	wrong
634	practice
635	sand
636	tail
637	wait
638	difficult
639	general
640	cover
641	material
642	isn't
643	thousand
644	sign
645	guess
646	forward
647	huge
648	ride
649	region
650	nor
651	period
652	blood
653	rich
654	team
655	corner
656	cat
657	amount
658	garden
659	led
660	note
661	various
662	race
663	bit
664	result
665	brother
666	addition
667	doesn't
668	dead
669	weight
670	thin
671	stone
672	hit

frequency	word
673	wife
674	island
675	we'll
676	opposite
677	born
678	sense
679	cattle
680	million
681	anyone
682	rule
683	science
684	afraid
685	women
686	produce
687	pull
688	son
689	meant
690	broken
691	interest
692	chance
693	thick
694	sight
695	pretty
696	train
697	fresh
698	drive
699	lead
700	break
701	sit
702	bought
703	radio
704	method
705	king
706	similar
707	return
708	corn
709	decide
710	position
711	bear
712	hope
713	song
714	engine
715	board
716	control
717	spread
718	evening
719	brown
720	clean

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

frequency	word
721	wouldn't
722	section
723	spent
724	ring
725	teeth
726	quiet
727	ancient
728	stick
729	afternoon
730	silver
731	nose
732	century
733	therefore
734	level
735	you'll
736	death
737	hole
738	coast
739	cross
740	sharp
741	fight
742	capital
743	fill
744	deal
745	busy
746	beyond
747	send
748	love
749	cool
750	cause
751	please
752	meat
753	lady
754	west
755	glad
756	action
757	pass
758	type
759	attention
760	gas
761	kitchen
762	pick
763	scale
764	basic
765	happen
766	safe
767	grown
768	cost

frequency	word
769	wear
770	act
771	hat
772	arm
773	believe
774	major
775	gray
776	wonder
777	include
778	describe
779	electric
780	sold
781	visit
782	sheep
783	I'd
784	office
785	row
786	contain
787	fit
788	equal
789	value
790	yard
791	beat
792	inch
793	sugar
794	key
795	product
796	desert
797	bank
798	farther
799	won
800	total
801	sell
802	wire
803	rose
804	cotton
805	spoke
806	rope
807	fear
808	shore
809	throughout
810	compare
811	movement
812	exercise
813	bread
814	process
815	nature
816	apart

frequency	word
817	path
818	careful
819	narrow
820	mental
821	nine
822	useful
823	public
824	according
825	steel
826	salt
827	speech
828	forth
829	nation
830	knowledge
831	appear
832	ate
833	dinner
834	hurt
835	spend
836	experiment
837	touch
838	drop
839	chair
840	east
841	separate
842	truck
843	sing
844	column
845	twice
846	particular
847	shop
848	unless
849	spot
850	neither
851	met
852	wheel
853	none
854	hill
855	television
856	bill
857	solve
858	pressure
859	report
860	farmer
861	count
862	trade
863	chief
864	month

frequency	word
865	clothes
866	doctor
867	indeed
868	dance
869	church
870	original
871	enjoy
872	string
873	sister
874	familiar
875	onto
876	imagine
877	blow
878	quick
879	law
880	lie
881	final
882	rise
883	loud
884	fair
885	herself
886	slow
887	noise
888	statement
889	hungry
890	join
891	tube
892	rode
893	empty
894	twenty
895	broke
896	nice
897	effect
898	paid
899	motion
900	myself
901	divide
902	supply
903	laid
904	dear
905	surprise
906	gun
907	entire
908	fruit
909	crowd
910	band
911	wet
912	solid

frequency	word
913	northern
914	flower
915	star
916	feed
917	wooden
918	sort
919	develop
920	shoulder
921	variety
922	season
923	share
924	jump
925	regular
926	represent
927	market
928	we're
929	flew
930	finger
931	expect
932	army
933	cabin
934	camp
935	danger
936	purpose
937	breakfast
938	proper
939	coat
940	push
941	express
942	shot
943	angry
944	southern
945	dress
946	bag
947	proud
948	neck
949	breath
950	strength
951	member
952	twelve
953	mine
954	company
955	current
956	pound
957	valley
958	double
959	till
960	match

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

frequency	word
961	average
962	die
963	liquid
964	alive
965	stream
966	provide
967	drink
968	experience
969	future
970	tomorrow
971	drove
972	population
973	finish
974	station
975	shook
976	stage
977	oxygen
978	poem
979	solution
980	burn
981	cent
982	electricity
983	everybody
984	rate
985	dust
986	worth
987	community
988	captain
989	bus
990	protect
991	cook
992	raise
993	further
994	steam
995	guide
996	discover
997	plain
998	usual
999	seat
1000	accept
1001	police
1002	consider
1003	dozen
1004	baseball
1005	rubber
1006	symbol
1007	support
1008	exactly

frequency	word
1009	industry
1010	they're
1011	beneath
1012	laugh
1013	groceries
1014	popular
1015	thank
1016	quarter
1017	climbed
1018	continue
1019	potatoes
1020	receive
1021	design
1022	president
1023	charge
1024	mistake
1025	hospital
1026	remain
1027	service
1028	increase
1029	students
1030	insects
1031	address
1032	sincerely
1033	dollars
1034	belong
1035	bottle
1036	flight
1037	forget
1038	bicycle
1039	secret
1040	soldier
1041	silent
1042	structure
1043	height
1044	observe
1045	indicate
1046	railroad
1047	knife
1048	married
1049	suggested
1050	entered
1051	magazine
1052	agree
1053	fifty
1054	escape
1055	threw
1056	planet

frequency	word
1057	dangerous
1058	event
1059	leader
1060	peace
1061	spelling
1062	chapter
1063	swimming
1064	opportunity
1065	immediately
1066	favorite
1067	settled
1068	telephone
1069	repeat
1070	prepare
1071	instance
1072	avenue
1073	newspaper
1074	actually
1075	employee
1076	review
1077	convince
1078	allowed
1079	nobody
1080	details
1081	muscles
1082	model
1083	climate
1084	coffee
1085	whenever
1086	serious
1087	angle
1088	feather
1089	determined
1090	dictionary
1091	ordinary
1092	extra
1093	rough
1094	library
1095	condition
1096	arrived
1097	located
1098	program
1099	pencil
1100	tongue
1101	title
1102	enemy
1103	garage
1104	lose

frequency	word
1105	vegetable
1106	parents
1107	style
1108	education
1109	required
1110	political
1111	daughter
1112	individual
1113	progress
1114	altogether
1115	activities
1116	article
1117	equipment
1118	discuss
1119	healthy
1120	perfect
1121	recognize
1122	frequently
1123	character
1124	personal
1125	disappear
1126	success
1127	traffic
1128	yesterday
1129	situation
1130	realize
1131	message
1132	recently
1133	account
1134	physical
1135	neighbor
1136	excited
1137	whisper
1138	available
1139	college
1140	furniture
1141	leather
1142	husband
1143	principal
1144	medicine
1145	excellent
1146	operation
1147	council
1148	author
1149	organize
1150	concern
1151	barbecue
1152	accident

frequency	word
1153	disease
1154	construction
1155	motor
1156	affect
1157	conversation
1158	evidence
1159	citizen
1160	environment
1161	influence
1162	cancel
1163	audience
1164	apartment
1165	worse
1166	transportation
1167	frozen
1168	waste
1169	couple
1170	function
1171	connect
1172	project
1173	pronounce
1174	offered
1175	apply
1176	improve
1177	stomach
1178	collect
1179	prevent
1180	courage
1181	occur
1182	foreign
1183	quality
1184	terrible
1185	instrument
1186	balance
1187	ability
1188	arrange
1189	rhythm
1190	avoid
1191	daily
1192	identity
1193	standard
1194	combine
1195	attached
1196	frighten
1197	social
1198	factory
1199	license
1200	recommend

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

How can the Core Words be divided by grade levels?

Following are two examples of the many different ways the words could be divided consecutively among grade levels to customize the program to meet various needs.

Example 1:

grade 1	word frequencies 1–30	(30 words)
grade 2	word frequencies 31–130	(100 words)
grade 3	word frequencies 131–265	(135 words)
grade 4	word frequencies 266–400	(135 words)
grade 5	word frequencies 401–600	(200 words)
grade 6	word frequencies 601–800	(200 words)
grade 7	word frequencies 801–1000	(200 words)
grade 8	word frequencies 1001–1200	(200 words)

A spelling program that encompasses only grades 1–6 does not need to accommodate all 1200 words within grades 1–6. It is always better to teach fewer words well than to teach many words poorly. Effective spelling instruction is not "covering" long lists of words.

Example 2 reflects Core Words drawn from a smaller word bank—just the first 800 of the 1200 total words in the word bank.

Example 2:

grade 1	word frequencies 1–25	(25 words)
grade 2	word frequencies 26–115	(90 words)
grade 3	word frequencies 116–250	(135 words)
grade 4	word frequencies 251–400	(150 words)
grade 5	word frequencies 401–600	(200 words)
grade 6	word frequencies 601–800	(200 words)

Once the number of Core Words has been determined and divided by grade level using the ***Spelling Sourcebook*** word bank as the resource, teachers can be presented with their new Core Word Curriculum. The Core Words are a customized set of words divided by grade level to accommodate a specific group of program users. The grade-level divisions for the customized set of Core Words should be recorded here as a resource for teachers using the program:

How has my school or school district divided the Core Words for teachers?

The Core Words by Grade Level

grades	word frequencies	number of words

APPENDIX II
Persuasive Writing Outline

PERSUASIVE WRITING OUTLINE

PARAGRAPH

Topic Sentence_____

#1 Reason #1_____
Reason #2_____
Reason #3_____

Reason #1_____

#2 Detail_____
Detail_____
Detail_____

Reason #2_____

#3 Detail_____
Detail_____
Detail_____

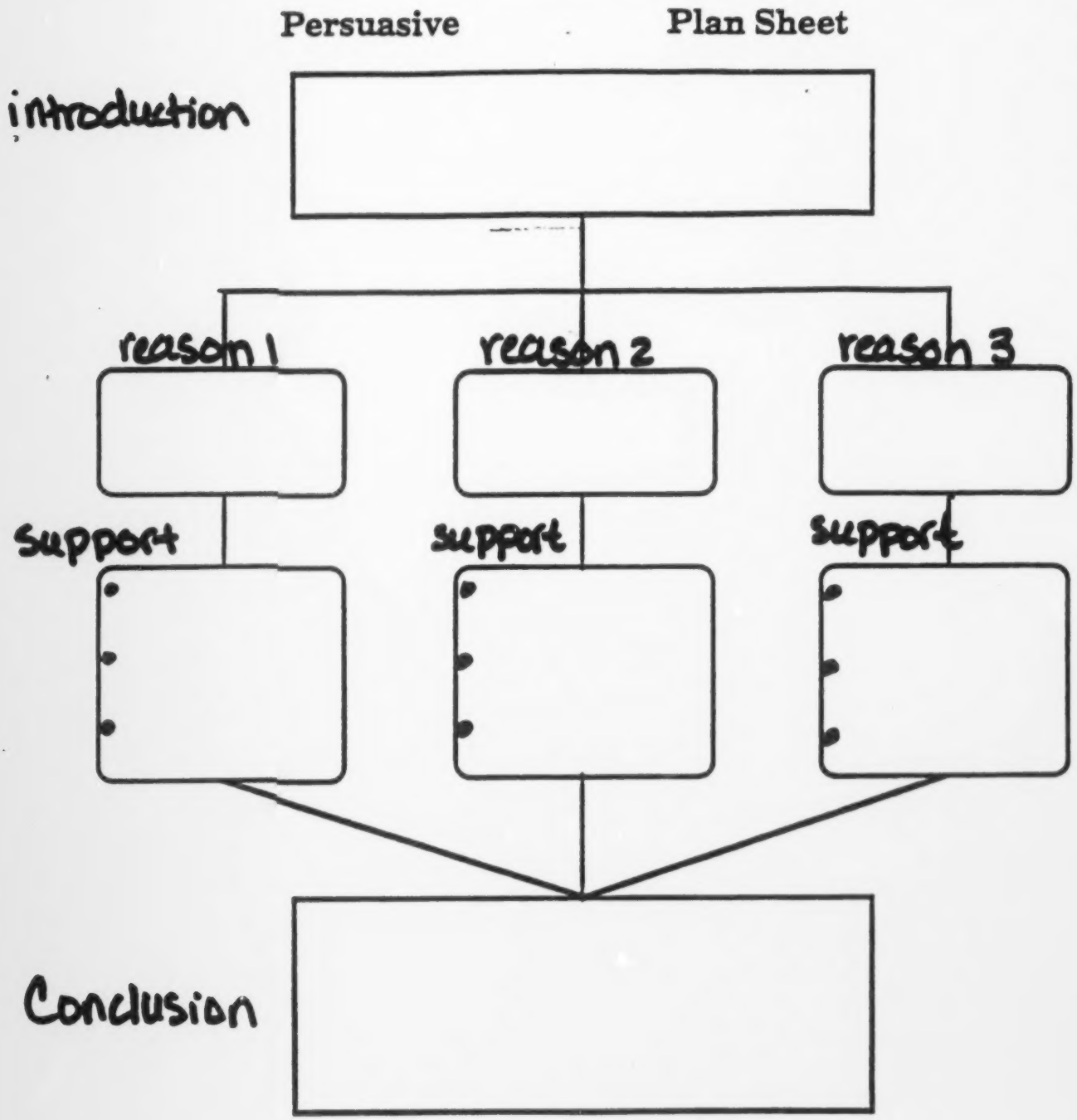
Reason #3_____

#4 Detail_____
Detail_____
Detail_____

Topic Sentence_____

#5 Reason #1_____
Reason #2_____
Reason #3_____
Conclusion Sentence_____

APPENDIX JJ
Persuasive Plan Sheet



APPENDIX KK
Persuasive Planning Guide

PERSUASIVE PLANNING GUIDE

TITLE:_____

I. Many people believe_____
_____

I think_____
_____

Argument A_____

Argument B_____

Argument C_____

II. Argument A_____
1._____
2._____
3._____

III. Argument B_____
1._____
2._____
3._____

IV. Argument C_____
1._____
2._____
3._____

V. Restate 3 Argument_____
_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX LL
Expository Writing Outline

EXPOSITORY WRITING OUTLINE

PARAGRAPH

Topic Sentence_____

#1 Fact/Step #1_____
Fact/Step #2_____
Fact/Step #3_____

Fact/Step #1_____

#2 Detail_____
Detail_____
Detail_____

Fact/Step #2_____

#3 Detail_____
Detail_____
Detail_____

Fact/Step #3_____

#4 Detail_____
Detail_____
Detail_____

Topic Sentence_____

#5 Fact/Step #1_____
Fact/Step #2_____
Fact/Step #3_____
Conclusion Sentence_____

APPENDIX MM
Expository Planning Guide

EXPOSITORY PLANNING GUIDE

TITLE:_____

I. Who_____
What_____
When_____
Where_____
Why_____
How_____

Main Idea A_____

Main Idea B_____

Main Idea C_____

II. Main Idea A:_____
1._____
2._____
3._____

III. Main Idea B:_____
1._____
2._____
3._____

IV. Main Idea C:_____
1._____
2._____
3._____

V. Restate 3 Main Ideas_____
_____
_____
_____

APPENDIX NN
Post-test Narrative Prompt

W.O.W. DAY
NARRATIVE PROMPT
Posttest February 2001

Describe a time in your life when you felt scared. What was your reaction? How did you feel? Describe what happened. Be sure to SHOW your feelings throughout your story.

You may use this paper for any pre-writing activities. Try your best!

APPENDIX OO
Post-Survey Parent Letter

February 16, 2001

Dear Parents,

The final days of our research project for our master's program through St. Xavier University are fast approaching. As part of the follow up portion of the data collection of the writing research, we would like to again have your opinion and feelings about your child's writing performance. Please complete the enclosed writing survey and return it to school by **Tuesday, February 20th**. All of your responses are, of course, strictly confidential.

We both thank you for your ever-constant support and cooperation. By working together, we feel that this experience has been a success.

Sincerely,

Miss Eleni Koulourianos
Countryside School

Mrs. Vickie Marienau
Lines School

APPENDIX PP
Post-Parent Writing Survey

Parent Name:_____ Date:_____
Student's Name:_____

Parent Writing Survey-February

For each item circle your response:

1. Does your child write at home beyond required homework?
   almost always sometimes almost never

2. Do you encourage your child to write at home?
   almost always sometimes almost never

3. Does your child enjoy writing letters, stories, poems, etc.?
   almost always sometimes almost never

4. Do you talk about your child's writing with him/her?
   almost always sometimes almost never

5. Do you enjoy writing letters, stories, poems, etc. at home?
   almost always sometimes almost never

6. Does your child see you writing at home?
   almost always sometimes almost never

7. Do you provide writing materials for your child?
   almost always sometimes almost never

8. Are you available to assist your child with rewriting if necessary?
   almost always sometimes almost never

9. What type of change have you seen in your child's motivation towards writing thus far?
   positive change no change negative change

10. Do you feel your child's writing has:
    improved stayed the same decreased

Please comment on any of the writing experiences your child has had this year.

APPENDIX QQ
Parent Portfolio Letter: 3rd Grade

Dear Parents,

As you know, your child is participating in an exciting new writing experience this year. The students have been working hard developing their writing skills through various activities. In addition, your child has been putting together a collection of his/her writing pieces in their writing portfolio.

Periodically, throughout the rest of the school year, I will be sending home your child's writing portfolio. I would like you to review the contents of the portfolio and share comments and observations about your child's work with them.

After your child has shared their writing portfolio with you, please complete the PQP reflection sheet. Your child will explain to you what a PQP is.

The ultimate goal is for us to work together to help your child grow as a writer. Sharing and reflecting is an extremely important component of our writer's workshop process.

Thank you in advance for your help and support. Your child will benefit greatly from this time you will spend with them.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Marienau

APPENDIX RR
Parent Portfolio Letter: 5th Grade

Dear Parents,

As you know, your child is participating in an exciting new writing experience this year. The students have been working hard developing their writing through various activities. In addition, your child has been putting together a collection of his/her writing pieces in their writing portfolio.

Periodically, throughout the rest of the school year, I will be sending home your child's writing portfolio. I would like you to review the contents of the portfolio and share comments and observations about your child's work with them.

After your child has shared their writing portfolio with you, please complete the Praise, Question, and Suggestion reflection sheet. Your child will explain the reflection format to you. If you still have questions please refer to the purple parent handbook that was given to you at parent/teacher conferences or call me here at Countryside.

The ultimate goal is for us to work together to help your child grow as a writer. Sharing and reflecting is an extremely important component of our writers workshop process.

Thank you in advance for your help and support. Your child will benefit greatly from this time you will spend with them.

Sincerely,
Miss Koulourianos

APPENDIX SS
Thoughts and Goals

Name:_____ Date:_____

Thoughts and Goals...

THOUGHTS:

The title of the writing piece I like the best is

_____

because_____

_____.

I worked my hardest on_____.

One thing I have learned about narrative writing is_____

_____

_____.

GOALS:

Two things I want to work on are:

1._____

_____

2._____

_____

APPENDIX TT
Parent PQP

Child's Name:_____ Date:_____

Parent's Name:_____

Praise:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Polish:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX UU
Parent Letter: Pen Pal Celebration

March 12, 2001

Dear Third Graders,

The time has finally arrived! You are going to meet your pen pals from Miss Koulourianos' 5th grade class at Countryside School! We will be going to Countryside School on **FRIDAY, MARCH 16th**. We will leave school at approximately 10:15am and return to school at 1:30pm.

Miss Koulourianos and I have planned many fun activities for you and your pen pals. We will be sharing our writing portfolios with each other and eat lunch together. Along with many other surprises...

On Friday, you will need to bring your lunch in a brown paper bag. If you normally buy your lunch at school, you will need to bring one from home.

I hope you are excited because your pen pals can't wait to meet all of you!

Mrs. Marienau

APPENDIX VV
Find a Pen Pal Search

Find a Pen Pal

Find a Pen Pal who...	Pen Pal's Name
...is an only child.	
...can play a musical instrument.	
...is able to swim.	
...can make a basket from the free-throw line.	
...has a birthday the same month as you.	
...can roll their tongue.	
...has hit a homerun.	
...hates vegetables.	
...enjoys singing.	
...has read at least one of the Harry Potter books.	
...has a dog or cat.	
...has broken a bone.	
...has been to Disney Quest.	
...can speak a foreign language.	